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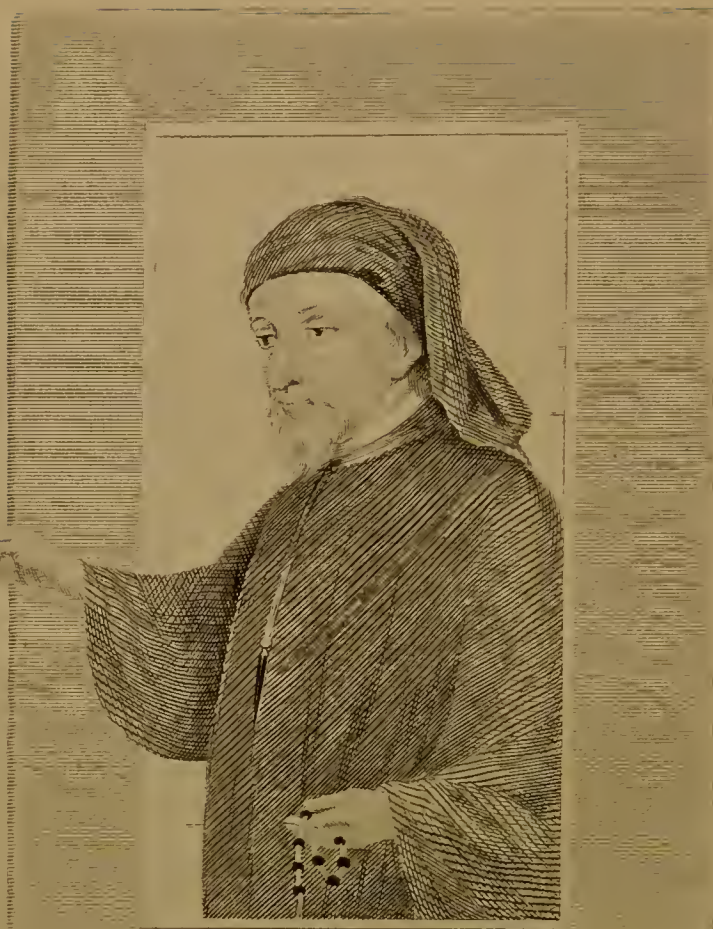
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POETICAL WORKS

OF

GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

VOLUME I.



C H A U C E R.

Al poogh his lyfe be queyut ve resemblaunce
 Of him hay in me so fressh lyflynesse.
 Yat to putte othir men in remembraunce
 Of his psones haue heere his lyknesse
 No make to pis ende in sothfastnesse:
 Yat pei y^t haue of him lest youghit Empride
 By vis pepnture may ageyn him fynde.

POETICAL WORKS

OF

GEOFFREY CHAUCER;

WITH POEMS FORMERLY PRINTED WITH HIS
OR ATTRIBUTED TO HIM.

EDITED, WITH A MEMOIR, BY

ROBERT BELL.

REVISED EDITION, IN FOUR VOLUMES.

WITH A PRELIMINARY ESSAY BY

REV. W. W. SKEAT, M.A.

VOLUME I.

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The notes signed S., T., and W., are respectively from Speght's and Tyrwhitt's editions of Chaucer, and Mr. T. Wright's edition of the Harleian MS. (7334) of *The Canterbury Tales*. Those added to this edition are included in brackets.

PRELIMINARY ESSAY.

BY THE REV. W. W. SKEAT, M.A.



IN preparing a reprint of the edition of Chaucer's works, usually known as Bell's edition, and originally included in the series of Bell's annotated editions of the English Poets, it seemed advisable to consider what improvements could best be made in order to add to the convenience and value of the work. I have ventured to suggest, in particular, that many of the poems might be re-arranged, so as to show more clearly which are the genuine works of the poet, and which are the poems that are probably, and in most cases decidedly, spurious. The Advertisement to the former issue contained the following notice:—"This edition of Chaucer's works includes all the poems which appear entitled, from internal or external evidence, to be considered genuine;" but it includes, as a fact, a considerable number which are now positively known to be spurious. It did not seem advisable, however, to omit these, because several of them are of considerable interest and value, and are worth having in an accessible form; besides which, they have so frequently been cited as Chaucer's, that their absence would be a practical inconvenience. Indeed, a little consideration will show that many of them crept into the old editions of Chaucer's works because they seemed to be worth preserving, and because to include them in those editions was the easiest way of doing so. To such

an extent was this principle carried, that poems were even included in the old editions that were positively known, at the time, to be by other authors. Thus in the edition of 1561, now before me, the title runs—‘Chaucer’s Woorkes, with diuers Addicions. Newlie Prynted by Ihon Kyngston, 1561.’ Amongst these “divers additions,” we find, at fol. cccxxx., back, a poem entitled ‘Ihon Gower, vnto the noble King Henry the iiij.’ At fol. cccxxxii., back, is ‘A saiying of dan Ihon,’ *i.e.*, of Dan John Lydgate. At fol. cccxxxiv., back, is ‘Scogan vnto the Lordes and Gentilmen of the Kinges house,’ in which he speaks of “my maister Chaucer, God his soule saue;” and in the course of the poem he quotes the three excellent stanzas which compose Chaucer’s poem of ‘Gentilesse.’ At fol. cccxxxvij, is ‘A balade of good counseile, translated out of Latin verses in-to Englishe, by dan Ihon lidgat cleped the monke of Buri.’ But the most remarkable addition is the whole of the long poem known as ‘Lydgate’s Storie of Thebes,’ in three books. Similar remarks apply to other editions, and it is well to bear in mind that many of them include pieces which not only are not Chaucer’s, but were never supposed to be so at any time whatever. The practical conclusion to be drawn is, of course, that the occurrence of a poem in an old edition of Chaucer is no certain proof that it was considered genuine even at the time of its first insertion; and if critics would but understand this, it would considerably clear the way, and render the consideration of the genuineness of the various poems an easy task. Indeed, when once prejudices and preconceptions are put aside, the task becomes, as I have said, an easy one; and we arrive at the right results readily enough, with but small chance of error. It is easy to go right in a matter when we have not first been taught wrongly; and I suppose that few readers will find any difficulty in accepting the

results I shall give below, excepting such as have imbibed wrong notions from various text-books, and prefer to cling to them instead of looking at the questions *for themselves*.

By way of convenience, I first give here the brief list of the early editions of Chaucer, which I have already printed once before, in my edition of Chaucer's 'Treatise on the Astrolabe,' p. xxvi.

1. Edition by Wm. Thynne, London, 1532. Folio.
2. Reprinted, *with additional matter*, London, 1542. Folio.
3. Reprinted, *with the matter re-arranged*, London, no date, about 1551. Folio.
4. Reprinted, *with large additions* by John Stowe, London, 1561. Folio.
5. Reprinted, *with additions and alterations* by Thomas Speght, London, 1598. Folio.
6. Reprinted, *with further additions and alterations* by Thomas Speght, London, 1602. Folio.
7. Reprinted, *with slight additions*, London, 1687. Folio.
8. Reprinted, *with additions and great alterations in spelling, &c.*, by John Urry, London, 1721. Folio.

The above list shows, at a glance, how Chaucer *has grown*, and suggests, at the same time, that the simplest way of ascertaining which poems are really Chaucer's is to consider each poem separately (1) by the external evidence *other than* the fact of its appearance in an old edition; and (2) by the internal evidence critically applied; one qualification for the critic being an intimate knowledge of Middle-English grammar.

There is one piece which I shall dispose of at once, viz., the long prose piece known as 'The Testament of Love,' from which "a tissue of romantic adventure has been drafted into the life of the poet." The fact is, simply, that it is, on the face of it, not Chaucer's, and, consequently, that the various particulars in his biography, which are founded upon it, are really particulars in the biography of somebody else; if, indeed, they be not purposely fictitious.

It is easy to see how this piece was inserted into Chaucer's works, and we may even be thankful to the old editors who thus preserved it for us. It was worth printing, and had a certain connection with the poet: as thus. Chaucer made a prose translation of Boethius on the 'Consolation of Philosophy,' which has lately been edited anew for the Early English Text Society, with great care and skill, by Dr. Morris. This piece relates how the author (*i.e.*, Boethius in the original) was pining in prison, but was consoled by Philosophy, who appeared to him in the form of a beautiful and gentle woman, and reasoned with him on the dispensations of divine providence. Now 'The Testament of Love' is a direct imitation of this, probably by one of Chaucer's pupils. The author likewise describes himself as pining in prison, but as consoled by a goodly lady, named Love, who alternately reproves and comforts him, exactly as Philosophy reproved and comforted Boethius. A good account of the general contents of the piece will be found in Prof. Morley's 'English Writers,' ii. 268. Prof. Morley does, indeed, speak of the work as "Chaucer's," but he is reduced, at p. 274, to reject all previous interpretations of the "piece of autobiography." But, surely, on the face of it, it is an odd thing that a man should take to parodying his own work after this fashion; and it is, moreover, extremely difficult to see how any person can read a certain passage in the Testament (unless he has unconquerable prepossessions), without seeing its incompatibility with the supposition that Chaucer wrote in such terms *about himself*. In the Third Book, Love talks thus to the prisoner; I modernise the spelling. "Quoth Love, I shall tell thee, this lesson to learn; mine own true servant, the *noble philosophical* poet in English*,

* *i.e.*, the translator of Boethius on the 'Consolation of Philosophy.'

which evermore him busieth and travaileth right sore, my name to increase, wherefore all that will [*i.e.* wish] me good owe [*i.e.* ought] to *do him worship and reverence both, truly his better nor his peer in school of my rules could I never find*: He, quoth she, in a treatise that he made of my servant Troilus, hath this matter touched, and at the full this question assoiled [*resolved, explained*]. Certainly *his* noble sayings can *I* not amend: *in goodness* of gentle manly speech, without any manner of nicety of 'starieres' (*sic*) imagination, in wit and in good reason of sentence, *he passeth all other makers,*" &c. This is plain English; the author says that, not being able to write on a certain topic as well as Chaucer, who is the greatest of all poets, he thinks he had better let that matter alone.

The really interesting point is to observe that the author seems to speak of Chaucer as if he were still living, a consideration which helps us to date the composition at a little before A.D. 1400, a conclusion which exactly agrees with the internal evidence. If we were asked to believe that it was written by Occleve, there would be nothing much to urge against such a theory; but to attribute it to Chaucer himself is manifestly preposterous. I can only suppose that the wording of the above quotation has not been previously sufficiently considered. We are thus clear of 'The Testament of Love,' and of all the difficulties in which its supposed references to Chaucer's own life and circumstances would involve us.

Passing on to the consideration of other pieces, we have really quite sufficient, and indeed almost superfluous evidence as to most of them. We find at the outset that such poems as 'The Canterbury Tales,' 'Troilus and Criseyde,' 'The House of Fame,' 'The Death of Blanche the Duchesse,' 'The Parliament of Foules,' and 'The Legend of Good Women,'

are all acknowledged by himself; and the internal evidence not only at once confirms their genuineness, but affords us plentiful information as to style, dialect, grammar, prosody, and rimes, such as may help us to judge the more confidently as to his other supposed works. He also clearly acknowledges the two prose treatises, viz.: the translation of Boethius, and the treatise on the Astrolabe; and, when we have included these, we already feel sure as to all his principal productions. To these we may add such as are attributed to him on good MS. authority, and as to which there has never been any doubt, viz.: the poem called Chaucer's 'A.B.C.,' attributed to him in some verses extant in MS. Cotton, Vitellius, C. xiii., leaf 255; the 'Complaint to Pite,' "made by Geffrey Chaucier the aureat poete," as is said at the head of the copy in MS. Harl. 78, leaf 80; 'The Complaint of Mars,' "made by Geffrey Chaucier at the comandement of the renommed and excellent Prynce my lord the duc John of Lancastre," as said in MS. Trin. Coll. Camb. R. 3, 20, p. 130; 'The Complaint of Venus,' which belongs to the foregoing, though written at a later period; the poem called 'Anelida and Arcite,' written by the author of 'The Knight's Tale,' but at an early period, and subsequently made use of to furnish some lines both in that tale and in 'The Squire's Tale;' and a few other minor poems, as to which there has never been any doubt. The following is a complete list of Chaucer's works, in an (approximately) chronological order, which I have mainly taken from Mr. Furnivall's 'Trial Forewords,' published for the Chaucer Society in 1871.

Chaucer's 'A.B.C.,' or 'La Priere de Nostre Dame.'

'Compleynte to Pite;' sometimes called 'The Compleynte of the Deth of Pite.'

'Deth of Blaunche;' otherwise called 'The Booke of the Duchesse;' written A.D. 1369.

- ‘Lyf of Seinte Cecile;’ afterwards inserted into the ‘Canterbury Tales,’ as ‘The Second Nun’s Tale.’)
- ‘The Parlement of Foules,’ or ‘The Assembly of Foules.’
- ‘The Complaint of Mars.’
- ‘Anelida and Arcite.’
- ‘Boethius de Consolatione Philosophiæ;’ a translation in prose.
- ‘The Former Age, or ‘Ætas Prima;’ printed at p. 180 of Dr. Morris’s edition of the translation of Boethius. It is a poetical version from Boethius, entitled ‘Chauceer vpon this fyfte metur of the second book.’
- ‘Troilus and Criseyde.’
- ‘Chaucer’s words to his scrivener Adam.’
- ‘The House of Fame;’ about A.D. 1384.
- ‘The Legend of Good Women;’ the earliest work in the metre known as the “heroic couplet.”
- ‘The Canterbury Tales;’ about A.D. 1386.
- ‘Good Counseil of Chaucer;’ or ‘Truth,’ or ‘Fle from the Pres;’ said to have been his last work, and, if so, to be put lower down.
- ‘Moder of God, and Virgin Undefouled.’
- ‘Two Proverbes’ (eight lines only, with sixteen spurious and unconnected lines sometimes appended).
- ‘A Treatise on the Astrolabe;’ A.D. 1391; in prose.
- ‘The Complaint of Venus.’
- ‘Lenvoy to Seogan.’
- ‘Lenvoy to Bukton.’
- ‘Gentilesse:’ a poem quoted in full by Seogan.
- ‘Lacke of Stedfastnesse;’ or, ‘A Ballad sent to King Richard;’ about A.D. 1397.
- ‘Ballade de Visage saunz Peinture;’ also, incorrectly, called ‘A Ballade of the Village (*sic*; without Painting.’
- ‘Compleint to his Purse;’ A.D. 1399.

Besides the above, we know of at least four works that are now lost. These are (1) ‘Origenes upon the Magdalene,’ mentioned in the prologue to ‘The Legend of Good Women,’ for which a poem by another author, entitled a ‘Lamentation of Mary Magdalen,’ was substituted in the old editions, owing to a certain similarity in the title; (2) ‘The Book of the Lion,’ mentioned near the end of ‘The Parson’s Tale;’ (3) a translation of Pope Innocent’s treatise, ‘De Miseria Conditionis Humanæ;’ this is mentioned

in the Cambridge MS. of 'The Legend of Good Women,' which contains a passage somewhat different from the printed copies; and (4) a translation of 'The Romaunt of the Rose;' on which see some further remarks below.

The above works are all undoubtedly and admittedly Chaucer's; and it is to be remembered that the evidence in their favour is *double*, viz. external and internal. For other works (which is the strong part of the case) the supposed evidence breaks down *doubly*; for whilst the internal evidence against them is weighty, the external evidence in their favour fails at the same time. It is this circumstance which renders it so easy to draw up a correct list.

Of the remaining poems which have been admitted into most editions, and are to be found in the present one, the most remarkable and valuable is 'The Romaunt of the Rose.' Chaucer tells us himself that he translated the French poem so called; and there is extant, in a MS. at Glasgow, a considerable fragment of a translation which was made in the fourteenth century, and which I believe can be shown to have been originally composed in a dialect much more northern than that of London. The early editors, coming across this translation, naturally enough concluded that it was Chaucer's, but there is, in fact, nothing to connect it with him externally. It is not marked as his in the MS.; and a considerable portion of it is deficient, so that it does not contain, *e.g.*, the passage which Chaucer copies in his 'Doctoures Tale' (see Tyrwhitt's note to Cant. Ta. 12,074), nor yet that which he copies in his story of Nero in the 'Monkes Tale.' And when it comes to be examined carefully, it presents, to those who have eyes to see, and who are sufficiently acquainted with Middle-English to apprehend, such clear and consistent evidences of an original northern origin, as to

settle the question beyond all doubt.* To which may be added that it transgresses, over and over again, the laws of Chaucer's prosody as obtained from his genuine works, and contains several rimes such as he never employs.† In a word, the particular translation of the Romaunt which we now possess, and which we must value because it is all we have, is *by another hand*.

'The Complaynt of the Black Knight,' or 'Complaynt of a Loveres Life' is now known, on MS. authority, to be Lydgate's; and the critic who knows Lydgate's style will not dispute this. The references in it to Chaucer's 'Legend of Good Women,' and to 'Arcite and Palemoun' are not without their special interest.

'The Cuckow and Nightingale' was no doubt inserted amongst Chaucer's works because the first two lines coincide with two lines in 'The Knight's Tale.' There is nothing else to connect the poem with Chaucer, and the evidence from the rimes is against it. It comes, however, much nearer to Chaucer's style than most of the spurious poems.

'The Flower and the Leaf' purports to have been written by a woman, and no doubt was so; the language is so clearly that of the fifteenth century (and not very early in the century either), that it is impossible to connect it with Chaucer. It contradicts the laws of prosody, and of rime, as deduced from his genuine works. The riming of "pleasure" with "desire" in stanza seventeen, is enough to make the most credulous person pause and reflect. Still it is, on its own merits, a pretty poem enough.

The poem entitled 'Chaucer's Dream' is absent

* I have made, for my own use, a considerable list of rimes in the Romaunt which agree, *not* with those in Chaucer, but with those in Barbour's Bruce!

† I give one example. *Thore* (there) is rimed with *more*. Chaucer writes *ther*, *more*, which cannot rime. Barbour writes *thar*, *mar*, a perfect rime. See R. R., 1853.

from the four earliest editions. It was first printed in 1598, so that there is, of course, no authority for connecting it with Chaucer beyond the title; and the title merely means, if rightly understood, that it is an attempt (and an unsuccessful one) to imitate Chaucer's style and language. The author says that it is "in evil English," and calls himself "a sleepy writer;" but it is, on its own merits, not so "evil written" after all. One curious characteristic is the astounding length of the sentences. There is no full stop in some editions, before the end of the seventieth line; and the reader who is curious in this matter may find plenty of similar examples. It is needless to say that it is not Chaucer's, but an imitation of him. The final *e*, so common in Chaucer, is here very rare, and the language is that of the fifteenth, not of the fourteenth century.

Of all the pieces attributed to Chaucer, none are so utterly unlike him as 'The Court of Love.' The language can scarcely be said to belong even to the fifteenth century, but belongs rather to the reign of Henry the VIII., or even later. It is known, too, how it came to be inserted into the much containing and singularly comprehensive volume which bears the title above-mentioned, viz., 'Chaucer's Woorkes, with diuers Addicions.' It first appeared in the edition of 1561, when John Stowe, who was casting about for what he might include in his edition, came across a copy of it, which now happens to be bound up with a copy of 'The Legend of Good Women,' and may have been similarly bound up in his days; whereupon he straightway inserted it. Fortunately, the very MS. in question is still preserved in Trinity College, Cambridge (marked R. 3. 19), and we can tell for ourselves, by inspection, that it is unconnected with the Chaucer poems, and not to be dated at all earlier, but rather considerably later than A.D. 1500, which is also the date with

which the language of the poem is found to correspond.

In fact, he was misled, and we can tell how; so that the matter is scarce worth further discussion. 'There is not, and never was, more reason for inserting it among Chaucer's poems, than there is reason for inserting Ireland's Vortigern among Shakespeare's plays; yet it is somewhat strange that this poem has been clung to by some readers and writers with great tenacity, chiefly because it contains the not very valuable allusion wherein the author declares that, at eighteen years of age he was a young man, and in another passage says his name was "Philogenet," and that he was "of Cambridge clerk;" from which it seems to have been assumed that he must be identified with Chaucer, because the latter speaks of Trumpington, not far from the same famous town. It seems to have escaped observation that there have been, at various times, a good many "clerks" at "Cambridge." The internal evidence against the poem, which hardly contains one clear example of the use of the final *e* which so abounds in Chaucer, is simply overwhelming.

The piece called the 'Virelai' contains no final *e*. It belongs to the fifteenth century. It was inserted merely because Chaucer said that he once wrote 'virelaies;' (see 'Legend of Good Women,' vol. iii. p. 333; also Franklin's tale, p. 495, *below*).

The few other poems, such as 'A Goodly Ballad,' 'A Praise of Women,' 'Prosperity,' 'Leaulte vaut Richesse,' 'Three Roundels,' and Chaucer's 'Prophecy,' are of small importance.

In the present edition, an attempt has been made to bring all the spurious or doubtful poems together into one volume. They proved, however, to be more than sufficient to fill the fourth volume, so that one of them, viz., 'Chaucer's Dream,' has found its way to the end of the third volume. There is not much

fear of its being mistaken for Chaucer's,* so that the line has thus been drawn with sufficient sharpness. The advantage of separating the true from the spurious poems is so obvious, that I hope the reader will be pleased with the result.

In a few places where newer information has suggested emendations in the notes to the former edition (which were written by Mr. Jephson), such slight corrections as were feasible have been made. All for which I am responsible are marked with my initials. In the main, with the exception of the rearrangement, and some necessary corrections in 'The Life of Chaucer' in vol. i., the edition remains the same as when completed by Mr. Jephson, under the supervision of Mr. Robert Bell.

* Mr. Furnivall speaks of "'Chaucer's Dreame,' which one could swear, after reading it, was not Chaucer's: the thing is impossible;" 'Trial Forewords,' p. 6.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

1328—1400.

REMEMBERING how little is known of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, we cannot be surprised at the scantiness of the information we possess concerning Chaucer, who flourished two hundred years before the Elizabethan period. When we consider, indeed, the remoteness of his age, and the long interval of darkness that followed, it becomes rather matter for surprise that we should possess so much. This information is derived from two sources: authentic documents, and certain passages in Chaucer's writings, supposed to contain allusions to his own life.¹ The materials collected from the latter source are, of course, purely conjectural. Some of Chaucer's biographers accept them without hesitation—others exclude them altogether.² In the following outline, the infe-

¹ These allusions occur in *The Court of Love*, and *The Testament of Love* [which are however no longer regarded as Chaucer's.—W. W. S.].

² The principal biographers of Chaucer are—1. Leland. 2. Speght, 1598. 3. Urry, 1721. This biography was not written by Urry, having been prefixed to the folio after his death; but his name is used in referring to it, to identify the edition. 4. Tyrwhitt, 1775-8. 5. Godwin, 1803. 6. Sir N. H. Nicolas, 1845. Of these, the first three are, upon the whole, the least reliable for facts. Leland, who lived nearest to Chaucer's time, and whose commission of investigation in the archives of the religious houses opened up much general information, abounds in mistakes. Speght deals largely in statements unsustained by proofs. Urry, who exhibits pains in the structure of his narrative, blends the speculative and the true in such a way as to render his labours comparatively valueless. Tyrwhitt was the first who reduced the biography to the few historical items that were capable of documentary verification rejecting all the rest. Godwin added several new particulars; but his voluminous work is so overlaid with conjectural matter that it cannot be consulted with safety, except for its criticisms, which exhibit taste and discrimination.

rences that have been drawn from the works of Chaucer are carefully distinguished from the facts that are supported by historical evidence; and the grounds are stated which either entitle them to notice, or justify their rejection.

The birth, birth-place, parentage, and education of Geoffrey Chaucer are involved in obscurity. According to a tradition, which cannot now be traced to its origin, he was born in 1328. Leland, his first biographer, speaks of him throughout as if he were born much later; which would seem to be confirmed by a deposition made by Chaucer himself in 1386, when he was cited as a witness in a cause of chivalry between Lord Scrope and Sir Richard Grosvenor. In this document, Chaucer avers that he was then of the age of '40 and upwards,' which would fix his birth about 1343 or 1344; but as the depositions of the other witnesses on the same occasion are extremely lax and inaccurate respecting their ages, the averment can be considered only as a matter of form, not intended to convey any more definite term than that the witness was, more or less, upwards of forty. Sir Harris Nicolas shows that the deposition is not to be relied upon, in consequence of the remarkable mistakes made in the ages of other deponents, 'some of whom are stated to have been ten, and others even twenty years younger than they really were.' We know by the inscription on Chaucer's tomb, erected in 1556 by Nicholas Brigham, a poet and man of erudition, that he died in 1400; and, as we learn incidentally from his own writings, and those of Gower and Oocleve,¹

The biography by Sir N. Harris Nicolas is the most complete and authentic. Sir Harris strictly confines his narrative to facts extracted from the public records, many of which had escaped his predecessors, and points out clearly the erroneous inferences and suppositions that had been drawn from Chaucer's writings.

¹ That Chaucer had attained a considerable age at the time of his death is placed beyond doubt by decisive testimonies. Gower, in 1392-3, speaks of him as being 'now in his dayes old;' Oocleve, lamenting his death, apostrophises him—'O maister deere and fadir reverent;' terms, says Sir Harris Nicolas, 'long used to indicate respect for age, and for superiority in any pursuit or science;' Chaucer alludes to himself as being 'olde and unlusty;' and Leland says that

that he lived to an advanced age, there is some probability, if no exact authority in favour of the earlier date.¹

A passage in *The Testament of Love* is supposed to determine the city of London as his birth-place, and would be conclusive of the fact if other particulars, drawn from the same source and proved to be erroneous, had not thrown suspicion upon the authority.² Of his family almost nothing

he 'lived to the period of grey hairs, and at length found old age his greatest disease.' The well-known portrait, painted by Occleve from memory (Harl. MS. 4866), agrees with these descriptions, and represents Chaucer with grey hair and beard, and features bearing evident traces of old age. In another portrait, found in an early, if not contemporary, copy of Occleve's poems in the Royal MS. 17, D. vi., he also appears very old, holding, as in Occleve's portrait, a string of beads in his left hand.

¹ 'The birth of Chaucer in 1328,' observes Tyrwhitt, 'has been settled, I suppose, from some inscription on his tombstone, signifying that he died in 1400, at the age of 72.' This 'supposition' has been adopted as a matter of fact by Mr. Singer and others; but there is no evidence whatever in support of it. No record of such an inscription has been discovered. The date of 1328 was first stated in print by Speght, but upon what grounds does not appear. In the deposition made by Chaucer in 1386, he says that he had then borne arms for twenty-seven years. This places the commencement of his military career in the year 1359, when, assuming him to have been born in 1328, he was thirty-one years of age. As most men who bore arms entered the profession at a much earlier age, the fact tends to discredit the date of his birth assigned by Speght, although the inference cannot be considered conclusive. On the other hand, the age indicated by the deposition is itself discredited by several circumstances. It, as is generally assumed, Chaucer produced his *Parliament of Birds* in 1358, we must believe, according to the deposition, that he wrote them when he was not more than fourteen or fifteen. [Or rather seventeen or eighteen: Chaucer's statement that he was of the age of forty and upwards in 1386 is good evidence that he was born about 1340. The tradition that he was born in 1328 has no authenticity, and does not agree with the known facts.—W. W. S.]

² *The Testament of Love* is an allegory written in prose, the heroine of which is a lady named Marguerite, who, notwithstanding that the author typifies her as a pearl, and gives us to understand also that the name is intended to represent grace, virtue, wisdom, and holy church, is nevertheless addressed throughout as a woman, to whom the writer offers up his homage with a vivacity that cannot be mistaken for the expression of a merely spiritual sentiment. The ingenuity that extracted from this mystical composition a clue to a series of incidents which the most careful examination will fail to detect in what the author himself calls the 'wimples and folds' of the allegory, is, perhaps, without a parallel. The real signification veiled under all this elaborate devotion—if it have any other signification than that which the title of the piece very plainly conveys—may be difficult, if not impossible, at this distance of time, to determine;

is known; and it would be idle to repeat the speculations that have been raised upon several persons of his name¹ who lived in the early part of the fourteenth century. Leland asserts that he was of noble family; Speght thinks that he was the son of a certain vintner who lived at the corner of Kirton-lane, and left all his property to the church; Pitt says that he was the son of a knight; Hearne, that he was a merchant; and Urry conjectures that he was the son of one John Chaucer, who attended Edward III. to Flanders and Cologne. It is certain that he received the education of a gentleman; and it is no less certain that his family were neither noble nor distinguished, although there is sufficient reason to conclude that they were wealthy and respectable.

It has been inferred from an allusion in *The Canterbury Tales* that he was educated at Cambridge. Leland says he was of Oxford, and that he finished his studies at Paris.² Other biographers reconcile these statements by supposing

but there can be no doubt that, whatever it means, it does not mean a confession of circumstantial personal details, and that the most conclusive evidence against the inferences drawn from *The Testament of Love* is furnished by *The Testament of Love* itself. [This treatise is not Chaucer's, but written by an admirer (probably a pupil) of his. The passage in which he is so highly praised seems to imply that he was still alive.—W. W. S.]

¹ Urry says that the name (variously given as Chaucier, Chaucieris, Chausier, Chausir, &c.) is originally French, and signifies a shoemaker. Tyrwhitt says that it rather means *un faiseur de chausses ou culottiers*, and that, according to the old spelling, Chaucessir, it might be derived from *Chanfecire*, an office which still exists under the title of *chafewax*. [It is now known that his father John Chaucer was a vintner in Thames Street; that his mother's name was Agnes; that his grandfather's was Richard, and his grandmother's Maria. This Maria was twice married, her first husband being named Heroun or Heyroun, whose will is dated April 7, 1349, his executor being his half-brother John Chaucer, the poet's father.—W. W. S.]

² Tyrwhitt is hardly just to Leland in saying that he assigns Chaucer's education to Oxford 'without a shadow of proof.' He may have had grounds for the supposition, and probably had, although he did not state them. Godwin discovers, in the dedication of *Troilus and Creseide* to Gower and Strode, both supposed to have been educated at Oxford, a reason for believing that Chaucer became acquainted with them there, the poem being one of his juvenile works. If Leland is to be credited, however, he made Gower's acquaintance, not at Oxford, but in the Inns of Court. Leland's story of Chaucer's travels into France to complete his education is entirely rejected by Tyrwhitt.

that Chaucer was of both universities; but Sir Harris Nicolas observes that 'there is no proof, however likely it may be, that he belonged to either.'

Under whatever auspices, or in whatever place, Chaucer studied, the extent of his acquirements is abundantly testified by his works and the evidence of his contemporaries. He was well acquainted with divinity and philosophy and the scholastic learning of his age, and displays in numerous passages an intimate knowledge of astronomy and of most of the sciences as far as they were then known or cultivated. He is said to have originally selected the law as his profession, and to have been a member of the Inner Temple, where upon one occasion he was fined two shillings for beating a Franciscan friar in Fleet-street.¹ The statement, however, should be received with caution, as there is reason to believe that lawyers were not admitted to the Temple till long after Chaucer had devoted himself to other employments.²

Although it is impossible to trace the chronology of Chaucer's poems with any approach to certainty, there cannot be much hesitation in assuming the *Troilus and Creseide* to have been among his earliest productions. It is placed first in the enumeration of his works by Lydgate, who expressly assigns it to his youth; a statement better entitled to credit than the announcement by the same authority that it was translated from 'a booke which is called *Trophe*,' or

¹ This anecdote is related by Speght on the authority of Mr. Buckley, who, he says, had seen the record of it in the Inner Temple. Leland corroborates the fact of Chaucer having studied in 'the colleges of the lawyers,' but, as usual, with a singular confusion of dates, assigning the period to the latter end of the reign of Richard II., when Chaucer was not only an old man, but otherwise provided for, and extremely unlikely to begin the study of the law.

² Thynne, who compiled the first complete edition of Chaucer's works, says that 'the lawyers were not of the Temple till the latter parte of the reygne of Edward III., at which time Chaucer was a grave manne, holden in greate credyt, and employed in embassye.' When Edward III. died, Chaucer was forty-nine years of age, assuming that he was born in 1328. Mr. Singer observes that if it could be proved that Chaucer was a member of the Inner Temple, 'it would be sufficient evidence of his birth and fortune, for only young men of noble and opulent families could support the expense of this Inn.'

than Chaucer's own singular declaration that his original was a Latin author 'called Lollius.' No such book or author has ever been discovered to have existed; and the substance of the poem, which Chaucer amplified and altered, is to be found in the *Filostrato* of Boccaccio.¹

The date of *The Assembly of Fowls*, or, as it is elsewhere called, *The Parliament of Birds*, may be referred to the year 1358, upon the supposition, which appears to be generally admitted, that it was composed with reference to the intended marriage between John of Gaunt and Blanche of Lancaster, which took place in 1359, and which the lady is represented in the poem as deferring for a twelvemonth.² From this circumstance also we gather the not unimportant fact that at this time Chaucer was on terms of intimacy with John of Gaunt. The poem called Chaucer's *Dream* was formerly supposed to have been written on the occasion of the nuptials.³

The first authentic notice of Chaucer occurs in 1359, when it appears, upon his own authority, that he served under

¹ Tyrwhitt confesses himself unable to explain 'how Boccaccio should have acquired the name of Lollius, and the *Filostrato* the title of *Trophe*;' but Godwin sees no difficulty in the case, and thinks it 'absurd to dispute the existence' of Lollius, of whom he avowedly knows nothing himself.

[After all, the simplest solution of these riddles is to cut the knot by the supposition that they have no real answer. Like all other Middle-English writers, Chaucer adduces his authorities in the vaguest manner, merely citing the names of authors who were supposed to have written on the subject. The statement of Lydgate is borrowed from the words 'seith Trophee' in Chaucer's *Monkes Tale*, *Hercules*, st. 3 (see vol. ii. p. 191). Of this apocryphal author nothing is known beyond the remark 'ille vates Chaldeorum Tropheus,' in the margin of the Ellesmere MS.; and he probably never existed. As to Lollius, the right solution is doubtless that of Dr. Latham, viz. that a misconception of the sense of Horace's line—'Trojani belli scriptorem, maxime Lolli' (Epist. i. 2. 1)—led to the notion that Lollius was a writer on the Trojan war! And the mere notion was quite enough to cause him to be cited accordingly.—W. W. S.]

² The female eagle wooed by the three 'tercels' is made to ask for a year's respite. See the poem, vol. ii. p. 385:

'. . . unto this yere be done
I aske respite for to avisen mee;
And after that to have my choice al free.'

³ [It is certain that the poem called *The Dream* is not Chaucer's, but is of later date. The mistake arose from confusion with *The Book of the Duchess*. See vol. iii. p. 437, *et seq.*—W. W. S.]

Edward III. in the expedition against France, upon which occasion he was made prisoner. At this period he is described as being 'of a fair and beautiful complexion, his lips full and red, his size of a just medium, and his port and air graceful and majestic.'¹ It is curious that in this year, 1359, when Chaucer was a prisoner in France, Godwin confidently assumes that he was residing at Woodstock; and cites, in support of this opinion, some descriptive passages which, he thinks, 'sufficiently answer to the geography of Woodstock-park.' Whether Chaucer ever resided at Woodstock, as most of his biographers assert, cannot be determined, for there is no proof of the fact; but it is evident that he could not have resided there in 1359.²

¹ This description is given by Urry from a portrait of Chaucer, painted at the age of thirty, and then (1721) in the possession of George Greenwood, of Chasleton, in Gloucestershire, Esq. The portrait is also mentioned by Grainger. Sir Harris Nicolas has collected an account of all the known authentic portraits. That, by Occleve, already alluded to, is the best yet discovered. It represents Chaucer with his grey beard bi-forked, in a dark-coloured dress and hood, a black case, containing a knife or pen-case, in his vest, his right hand extended, and a string of beads in his left. The portrait, also previously mentioned, in Occleve's poems, is a full-length, in black vest, hood, stockings, and pointed boots. A third portrait, in *The Canterbury Tales*, Lansd. MS. 851, dating within twenty years of the poet's death, is a small full-length inserted in the initial letter of the volume, in a long grey gown, red stockings, and black shoes fastened with sandals. Here the head is bare, and the hair closely cut. Sir Harris Nicolas refers to other portraits; but these appear to be the most authentic.

² Endless discussions might be raised on such passages as Godwin cites, leaving the question in the end exactly where it was in the beginning. More consideration is due to the authentic statement that a house, still denominated in deeds and legal instruments as 'Chaucer's house,' adjoins the principal entrance of Woodstock-park. But even the speculation which this fact would seem to warrant is set aside by Sir Harris Nicolas, who observes that this house 'was more probably the house of Thomas Chaucer, to whom the Manor of Woodstock was granted by Henry the Fourth, ten years after the poet's death.' This is the earliest evidence extant of any connection of the name of Chaucer with Woodstock. It is possible, no doubt, that the poet at some time resided at Woodstock, and that, consequently, it might have been selected as a gift to the son; but this kind of inference, whatever show of probability it may carry, cannot be allowed to possess any historical weight. Speght tells us that the square stone house near the park gate called Chaucer's house, was passed under

At what time Chaucer returned to England has not been ascertained. It is probable that he was ransomed on the conclusion of the peace of Chartres in 1360, as there is ground for supposing that his marriage took place in that year.¹ Amongst the persons brought over to England in her retinue by Queen Philippa in 1328 was Sir Payne Roet, a native of Hainault, and Guienne King of Arms. This gentleman had two daughters: Katherine, who entered the service of the Duchess Blanche, the first consort of John of Gaunt, Duke of Lancaster; and a younger daughter, Philippa,² who was taken into the royal household as one of the maids of honour. To this lady (who has been confounded by some writers with Philippa Picard, also one of the maids of honour) Chaucer was married; an alliance that subsequently brought him into the most intimate relations with John of Gaunt. In September, 1366, the Queen granted an annual pension of ten marks to Philippa Chaucer, which was continued to her by the King after her Majesty's death in 1369; when, being no longer in the royal household, she became attached to the person of the Duchess Constance, the second consort of John of Gaunt. In the interval her sister Katherine, having married Sir Hugh Swynford, a Lincolnshire knight, and become a widow, had returned to the Duke's service in the capacity of governess to the children of his former Duchess. While she was in this situation, Katherine Swynford is supposed to have yielded to the soli-

that name by Queen Elizabeth to the tenant who then held it; and we learn from Urry that in his time there was a printed copy of Chaucer's works, with a Latin inscription on the first page, chained in the parlour.

¹ This is the date given by Tyrwhitt, but without reference to any authority. Sir Harris Nicolas shows that the marriage must have taken place at least before September, 1366.

² The name of Philippa was at that time much used in Hainault, 'in regard,' as one of the old biographers says, 'of its being the Queen's name.' Sir Harris Nicolas thinks it not unlikely that this lady's baptismal name was given to her from being the Queen's god-daughter. He speaks of her as being older than her sister Katherine. The early biographers, with greater probability, describe her as being younger.

citations of the Duke, who first made her his mistress, and afterwards married her. The Duke's regard for Chaucer and his wife was evinced by substantial gifts. In 1372, he conferred upon Philippa Chaucer a pension of 10*l.* per annum; and on different occasions presented her with valuable presents, besides bestowing other marks of his favour and protection on her husband and children.

In 1367, Chaucer was made one of the valets of the King's chamber; and in the same year the King granted him an annual salary of twenty marks for life, till he should be otherwise provided for, under the designation of 'dilectus Valettus noster,' which Selden says 'was conferred on young heirs designed to be knighted, or young gentlemen of great descent or quality.'¹ Chaucer appears to have been absent from England, on the King's service, in the summer of 1370; and towards the end of 1372 he was joined in a commission with two citizens of Genoa, for the purpose of determining upon an English port where a Genoese commercial establishment might be formed. An advance of 66*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* having been made to him on the 1st of December, on account of his expenses, he is supposed to have left England immediately after; and all that is actually known of his mission, observes Sir Harris Nicolas, drawing his information from the entries in the Issue Rolls, is that he visited Florence and Genoa, and that he certainly returned to England before the 22nd November, 1373, on which day he received his pension in person.

It was during his visit to Italy on this occasion that Chaucer is said to have visited Petrarch at Padua, a supposition derived from a passage in the Prologue to the *Clerk of Oxenford's Tale*, in which the narrator says that he

¹ There is much confusion in the early biographies in this matter. Urry says that Chaucer was soon after made Gentleman of the King's Privy Chamber, that an additional pension of twenty marks was bestowed upon him, and that he was subsequently appointed Shield-bearer to the King. The whole of these statements appear to have originated in the grant and appointment above-mentioned, which alone is sustained by evidence.

'learned' the tale of *Griselda* from a 'worthy clerk' at Padua, 'Fraunceis Petrark, the laureat poete.' If Chaucer had made this statement in his own person, which, undoubtedly, the structure of *The Canterbury Tales* afforded him the opportunity of doing, there could be no grounds for any discussion as to its truth; but having made it through the medium of a fictitious character, and not in his own person, the fact of such an interview having ever taken place has been called into question. Whether the reasoning founded upon the manner in which Chaucer thought fit to communicate the tale is sufficiently satisfactory to discredit the source to which he refers it, every reader must be considered competent to decide for himself. Upon this point, however, it may be well to observe that a distinction should be drawn between that which is given as fiction and that which is stated as reality; and that when Chaucer alludes to a real person in the introduction to the story, he so far departs from the dramatic assumption maintained in the rest of the prologue. As it is clear that the Clerk of Oxenford, being purely an imaginary personage, could not have learned the story at Padua from Petrarch, the difficulty becomes narrowed to a choice of two very obvious alternatives:—we must believe either that the whole statement is an invention, for which no intelligible reason can be assigned, and which is, certainly, on the face of it improbable; or that Chaucer himself obtained the story from Petrarch.

Several circumstances tend to strengthen this latter conclusion, which acquires additional force from the absence of a single particle of evidence against it. Petrarch was at Arqua, near Padua, when Chaucer is known to have been at Florence. There was nothing to prevent Chaucer from visiting Petrarch; while, on the other hand, it is extremely likely that he would have desired such a meeting. That his visit to Padua should not be found recorded in the Issue Rolls cannot be alleged as a ground of doubt, because the Rolls mention none of the places he visited except Florence and Genoa, to which cities he appears to have gone on the

business of his mission. The time when Petrarch made the Latin translation of the tale of *Griselda* from the *Decameron* (which translation is supposed to have furnished Chaucer with the story), cannot be fixed with precision; but it is needless to enter upon a discussion of dates which are not disputed, for the purpose of showing that the translation was made before the period of the supposed meeting. If Sir Harris Nicolas's opinion that Chaucer was not acquainted with Italian (an opinion which most readers of Chaucer's poetry will agree with Mr. Wright in rejecting), could be admitted to be well-founded, it would help still further to sustain the inference that Chaucer did not get the story from the *Decameron*, but from a Latin source, and, therefore, most probably, from Petrarch's translation. But it is not necessary to establish this inference in order to support the supposition that he procured the story from Petrarch. It does not seem very certain from the language of the Clerk that he obtained it from a translation, or from a writing of any kind, but rather from word of mouth. He tells us distinctly enough that he 'learned' it of a 'worthy clerk,' and again that 'this worthy man *taught*' him the tale. It is true that towards the conclusion of the tale he tells us that Petrarch 'writeth this storie,' a circumstance which does not invalidate the presumption that Chaucer may have learned it orally from Petrarch. Upon this point, a note (which has escaped the vigilance of Chaucer's biographers) made by Petrarch upon his translation, may be thought to possess some interest. Petrarch observes, in reference to the story of *Griselda*, that 'he had heard it many years before'—that is, before Boccaccio had made it the subject of one of the novels of the *Decameron*. As it thus appears that he was well acquainted with the story, which was, in all probability, a popular legend, he might consequently have related the substance of it to Chaucer, before he had made his translation of the novel, or before he had even seen the *Decameron*. The allusion by the Clerk of Oxenford to the fact that Petrarch had written the story, does not necessarily imply that Chaucer received it

in that shape; because *The Canterbury Tales* were not composed till many years after Petrarch's death, when the translation must have been generally known.¹ The omission, also, of all notice of Boccaccio, to whom Chaucer had been largely indebted, not only in *The Canterbury Tales*, but upon other occasions, although not in itself conclusive, is, at least, a suggestive element in the case. If Petrarch had communicated the story as having derived it himself from Boccaccio, it may be presumed that Chaucer would have made some reference to its original source. That he has not acknowledged his obligations to Boccaccio elsewhere is nothing to the purpose; for in those instances he makes no acknowledgment whatever, while here he goes out of his way to make an explicit avowal of his authority.

The only object of sifting such points as these is to exhaust the speculations that present themselves in the course of the inquiry, and to reduce a question of some literary interest to its exact limits. The result is clear and simple. There are no proofs that Chaucer and Petrarch met at Padua; nor is there, on the other hand, any constructive or collateral evidence, as to time, place, or circumstances, to show that such a meeting was impossible, or even unlikely. The fact rests altogether on Chaucer's own testimony, given in the person of the Clerk of Oxenford, and the precision of that testimony should not be overlooked in weighing the amount of credit to which it is entitled. The Clerk does not say in general terms that he obtained the story from Petrarch, but that he learned it from him at Padua. A statement so particular carries at all events the appearance of being intended to apply to an actual occurrence, and not to a fictitious incident.

The death of the Duchess Blanche in 1369 supplied Chaucer with the subject of his poem called *The Book of the Duchess*, known in the early editions by the less appropriate

¹ Petrarch died in July, 1374, and the earliest date assigned to *The Canterbury Tales* is subsequent to 1386.

title of *The Dream of Chaucer*. Mr. Godwin thinks that, from the tenor of this poem, 'we may conclude with certainty that Chaucer was unmarried when he wrote it;' a fact in which he is confirmed by the discovery that Philippa Picard, who, he says, was 'unquestionably' the wife of Chaucer, received a pension from the King in her maiden name in 1370, and, therefore, could not have been married to Chaucer till afterwards. This is a characteristic sample of the errors into which the imaginative biographers of Chaucer have fallen; errors which they frequently endeavour to support by trains of reasoning that commit them to still more extravagant hypotheses. Thus, in order to account for the singular circumstance of the daughter of Sir Payne Roet not bearing her father's name, Mr. Godwin informs us that it was very common in France for persons to have 'two' surnames (which there is no evidence whatever to show was the case with the lady in question), and that, consequently, brothers and sisters 'often exhibited in their ordinary signatures no token of relationship.' It is almost superfluous to observe that this statement, whatever it may be otherwise worth, is only a waste of ingenious speculation in reference to the Roet family, who were natives of Germany, and, therefore, not governed by the customs of France. Believing that he had found in Chaucer's poems some grounds for the opinion that the poet had been ten years a suitor to this Philippa Picard, Mr. Godwin thinks it necessary to explain why she did not marry him sooner; and then he proceeds to assign the reason. He takes it for granted that she could not have been indifferent to the pretensions of so accomplished a lover; 'but,' he adds, not in the language of inference or supposition, but as if it were an ascertained fact, 'she could not resolve to quit the service of her royal mistress.' The 'main topic of her objection,' however, having been removed by the death of the Queen, Mr. Godwin tells us that 'their nuptials were celebrated as soon as the general laws of decorum, and the ideas of female delicacy, would allow!'

The next authentic notice of Chaucer occurs in a writ dated 23rd April, 1374, granting him a pitcher of wine daily,¹ afterwards commuted into a money payment.² In the same year he was appointed Comptroller of the Customs in the Port of London, under strict conditions that he was to write the rolls of his office with his own hand, to be constantly present, and to perform all the duties in person, and not by deputy.³ At the same time the pension of 10*l.*, which the Duke of Lancaster had conferred upon the poet's wife two years before, was converted into an annuity to both, to be held for life by the survivor, and to be paid out of the revenues of the Savoy. In 1375, Chaucer obtained a grant of the lands and custody of the son and heir of Edmond Staplegate, of Bilsinton, in Kent;⁴ and also the custody of five 'solidates' of rent in Solys, in Kent, a matter of little pecuniary value.⁵

Soon afterwards we find Chaucer employed on two secret missions; in 1376 in the 'comitiva,' or retinue, of Sir John Burley; and in 1377 in association with Sir Thomas Percy (afterwards Earl of Worcester), with whom he proceeded to Flanders. The objects of these missions are not recorded;

¹ This grant has given occasion to a variety of speculations as to the circumstances under which it took place; but they may be dismissed as having no more claim to credit than Speght's report of Chaucer having been present in Milan with Petrarch, at the Duke of Clarence's marriage, in 1368—a circumstance of which no proof of any kind can be adduced.

² The money value of the grant may be estimated from the amount received in payment of the wine for a period of eight months from October, 1376, to June, 1377—7*l.* 2*s.* 6½*d.*; a large sum at that period.

³ None of the rolls in the handwriting of Chaucer are known to exist; and the only record that has been traced having relation to his office is a grant to him, in 1376, of a sum of 7*l.* 4*s.* 6*d.*, being a fine levied on one John Kent, of London, for shipping some wool to Dordrecht without paying the duty, the attempted fraud having been apparently brought to light by the vigilance of Chaucer.

⁴ It appears that this was a lucrative guardianship, the sum of 104*l.* having been paid to Chaucer for the wardship and marriage of the minor.

⁵ A 'solidate,' according to Blount, was as much land as was worth a shilling annually; but Sir Harris Nicolas thinks there is great doubt as to its precise value.

but it is stated by Froissart that in the February of the latter year he was joined with Sir Guichard d'Angle (afterwards Earl of Huntingdon) and Sir Richard Strong to negotiate a secret treaty for the marriage of Richard, Prince of Wales, with Mary, daughter of the King of France. Sir Harris Nicolas shows that Froissart has mistaken the dates and the circumstances. Chaucer was in Flanders in February with Sir Thomas Percy, and was in London in April, when he received a payment in person on account of his services, and was again despatched with a letter of protection to continue in force till the following August. In the June of this year Edward III. died, and his successor, Richard II., continued to Chaucer his annual grant of 20 marks, with an additional grant of the same amount, in lieu of the daily pitcher of wine. In January, 1378, he was joined with Sir Guichard d'Angle and others in the negociation for the King's marriage; and, returning in a short time to England, was sent in the month of May, with Sir Edward Berkeley, to Lombardy on an embassy, the precise nature of which is not known. Throughout the whole of these diplomatic engagements, for which Chaucer received regular payments, he continued to hold his office of Comptroller of the Customs; and as the condition of personal attendance had not yet been formally abrogated, we must infer that he received special permission to absent himself on these occasions.

Upon his departure for Lombardy, it was necessary that he should have two representatives 'to appear for him in the courts;'¹ and the persons he selected were John Gower, the poet, and one Richard Forrester. This evidence of the long-standing friendship between Chaucer and Gower affords a gratifying confirmation of the personal regard they expressed towards each other in their works; and which we would willingly believe to have lasted to the end of their lives, notwithstanding that its dissolution some time before

¹ Sir H. Nicolas. It is not clear for what purpose, whether in reference to his office, or his private affairs.

Chaucer's death has been made a subject of discussion by Chaucer's commentators.¹

Early in 1379 Chaucer returned to England; and nothing more is known of him, except that he continued to receive his pensions either in person or by assignment, till 1382, when he was appointed Comptroller of the Petty Customs in the Port of London, in addition to his former office. We learn further, from the researches of his last biographer, that in November, 1384, he obtained a month's leave of absence, on account of his private affairs, on which occasion a deputy was sworn in to perform his duties; and that in the following February he was finally released from the drudgery of personal attendance, by being allowed to appoint a permanent deputy.

Being now at liberty to consult his own inclinations, he turned his attention to political affairs, and was elected one of the representatives of Kent in the Parliament which met at Westminster on the 1st October, 1386. All circumstances concur in justifying the supposition that he entered the House of Commons for the purpose of supporting the ministers of the day, who were in the interest of his friend and patron, the Duke of Lancaster. The Parliament sat only a month; and its proceedings were directed with great violence against the

¹ The grounds upon which their friendship is supposed to have been interrupted will be found stated in the introduction to the *Man of Lawes Tale*, vol. ii. p. 9. The received notion that Gower was antecedent to Chaucer is entirely erroneous. It obtained currency from Dr. Johnson's hasty assertion that Chaucer was Gower's 'disciple.' The date of Gower's birth is assumed by Mr. Todd to have been about 1325; but it was probably several years later, as he survived Chaucer eight years. A short time before his death he undertook the revision of the *Confessio Amantis*, which he would scarcely have attempted had he attained the great age of 83. Nothing is known with certainty of his family. Caxton says he was born in Wales. All other authorities derive his extraction from the Gowers of Stittenham, in Yorkshire, now represented by the Duke of Sutherland; but Sir Harris Nicolas has clearly shown (*Ret. Rev.*, N.S., ii. 103) that this statement is unfounded. He was evidently possessed of considerable property, although he was not a knight, as the old writers assert, and as the inscription of *armiger* on his tomb disproves. He was attached through life to the party of Thomas of Woodstock, and received from Henry IV. a collar, with a swan attached, which is represented on his monument in the church of St. Mary Overy (St. Saviour's), Southwark.

government.¹ There was little opportunity for displaying much zeal in the service of the Duke, whose influence was now rapidly declining; but Chaucer's known devotion to his cause was sufficient to bring him under the displeasure of the hostile advisers who soon afterwards obtained the confidence of the King. To this source may in part, if not altogether, be ascribed the reason of his dismissal in December, 1386, from both the offices he held in the Customs.

A commission was issued in November, 1386, to inquire into alleged abuses in the departments of the Subsidies and Customs; an investigation which seems to have led to no results. It is possible, but in the last degree unlikely, judging from subsequent circumstances, that Chaucer may have been dismissed in consequence of defaults in the discharge of his duties. It is much more probable, however, that his connexion with the Duke of Lancaster, and, to some extent, his attachment to the Duke's principles (although it is by no means certain that he entertained the same extreme views on ecclesiastical questions) mainly influenced this harsh measure.

In addition to the loss of his offices in 1386, Chaucer suffered a severe domestic misfortune in 1387 by the death of

¹ It was during the sitting of this Parliament that Chaucer was examined as a witness on the right of Lord Scrope to the Arms 'azure a bend or,' in opposition to the claim of Sir Robert Grosvenor. As every personal anecdote relating to Chaucer deserves preservation, the concluding passage of his deposition will be read with interest. After stating that he had always heard that these arms belonged to the family of Scrope from time immemorial, and that he had seen Lord Scrope so armed in France, Chaucer replies to the interrogation as to whether he had ever heard of any interruption or challenge by Sir Richard Grosvenor or any of his ancestors? 'No; but he said that he was once walking in Friday-street, in London, and, as he was walking in the street, he saw hanging a new sign made of the said arms, and he asked what inn that was that had hung out these arms of Scrope? and one answered him, and said, No, sir, they are not hung out for the arms of Scrope, nor painted there for these arms, but they are painted and put there by a knight of Chester, whom men call Sir Robert Grosvenor; and that was the first time he ever heard speak of Sir Robert Grosvenor, or of his ancestors, or of any other bearing the name of Grosvenor.'

his wife. With certain exceptions which have not been accounted for, she received the pension settled upon her by Queen Philippa, and afterwards confirmed by Richard II., from 1366 to June, 1387; after which date no further notice of her name appears, so that it is supposed she died before her next half-year's payment became due. Of Chaucer nothing is known during the years 1387 and 1388, except that he regularly received his two pensions, and that in the May of the latter year they were both cancelled at his own request, and assigned to one John Scalby, to whom he had probably sold them under the pressure of distress.

The dismissal of Thomas of Woodstock, the King's uncle, and of Walsingham, the Chancellor, and their colleagues, in May, 1389, and the appointment of new ministers, one of whom was the son of the Duke of Lancaster, once more brought Chaucer's friends into power; and only a few months elapsed before they found an opportunity of advancing his interests. In July, 1389, he was appointed Clerk of the King's Works, embracing the Palace at Westminster, the Tower, the royal manors of Kennington, Eltham, Clarendon, Shcen, Byfleet, Childern Langley, and Feckenham, the lodges in the New Forest and the royal parks, and at the mews for the King's falcons at Charing Cross. This important office he was permitted to execute by deputy, and his salary was two shillings per diem. Payments made to him immediately after his appointment, show that he entered upon his duties at once; and the nature of the works in which he was engaged is exhibited in a commission dated 12th July, 1390, directing him to execute certain repairs at St. George's Chapel, in the Castle of Windsor. The cause of his retirement from this office has not been ascertained; but there is no doubt that he ceased to fill the situation some time in the course of 1391, as in the September of that year it was held by one John Gedney.

A long chasm now occurs in his history. Godwin supposes that he retired to Woodstock; and also that in March, 1391 (while he was yet Clerk of the Works), he wrote his *Con-*

clusions of the Astrolabie, addressed to his son, 'little Lewis.' The latter supposition is founded upon a date introduced into the treatise to illustrate the working of two of the problems.¹

Of Chaucer's pecuniary resources during the interval from 1391 up to February, 1394, when he obtained a grant from the King of 20*l.* a year for life, nothing is known, except that he still enjoyed his pension of 10*l.* from the Savoy, and his wages as King's Esquire, the value of which, beyond an allowance of forty shillings half-yearly for robes, is doubtful. That he was reduced to great distress is sufficiently evident from numerous small loans which he obtained on his new pension, and which have been traced through the Issue Rolls by Sir Harris Nicolas down to the year 1398;² and from the fact that in May, 1398, the King granted him letters to protect him against arrest. In these letters it was set forth that his Majesty had appointed him to perform sundry arduous and urgent duties, and that, fearing he might be impeded in the execution of them by various suits, his Majesty took him under his special protection, forbidding any one to sue or arrest him on any plea, except it were connected with land, for a term of two years. Letters of this description were matters of form, in which, as in this case, the duties were sometimes a mere fiction to cover the real object of protecting the freedom of the recipient.

¹ 'Ensample as thus. The yere of our Lorde a thousande, thre hundred, ninetie and one the xii. daie of Marche at middaie, I would knowe the degree of the sonne, &c.:' and again, 'The yere of our Lorde a thousande, thre hundred, ninetie and one, the twelveth daie of Marche, I would knowe the tide of the daie, &c.'—*The Conclusions of the Astrolabie*. From these passages Speght assumed that the treatise was written in 1391, an inference amplified more circumstantially by Godwin, who also takes it for granted, from a passing reference to the latitude of Oxford, that Chaucer must have been at the time in the neighbourhood of that city. [The date is now generally accepted.—W. W. S.]

² The extremity of his circumstances is exhibited in the trifling amounts of some of these loans. On one occasion he borrowed 1*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.*; and on the 24th July, 1393, he applied in person, at the Exchequer, for a loan of 6*s.* 8*d.*, and went again, a week afterwards, to solicit a similar sum.

Chaucer's pecuniary circumstances throughout the greater part of his life must have been ample for the maintenance of that position in society which his connections entitled him to hold; although it cannot be very readily believed, according to the construction put upon some passages in his works, that at one period he lived in great splendour, or that, according to Speght, he had altogether an income of one thousand pounds per annum. The fluctuations that took place from time to time in his resources, and the want of information as to the profits he derived from his various appointments, render the total amount of his income a matter of speculation. For many years previously to the death of his wife, his pensions yielded him about 40*l.* a-year, afterwards reduced, by the sale of his annuities, to 10*l.*, again raised, by a new grant, to 30*l.*, and finally increased, in the last year of his life, to about 62*l.* Assuming that his offices, especially with contingent advantages attached to them (of which we have an instance in the penalty levied on a defaulter in the Customs, and bestowed upon Chaucer), were more lucrative than his pensions, Chaucer's revenues, while he held his appointments, may be safely averaged at double these amounts.¹ It is not easy to ascertain what such an income ought to be rated at by the present value of money. The materials upon which the calculation should be founded are contradictory and perplexing; and the writers who have discussed the question differ so widely in the conclusions at which they have arrived, that they may be said to have complicated rather than diminished the difficulty. Godwin, who investigated the subject minutely, estimates the value of money in the fourteenth century as being equal to eighteen times the same amount in the nineteenth; Sir Harris Nicolas is inclined to reduce this estimate nearly one-half; while a comparison of the prices of articles of consumption in the two periods would

¹ Sir Harris Nicolas, properly anxious to avoid exaggeration, is content to set down Chaucer's offices at half the value of his pensions.

justify us in multiplying the nominal value of money in the fourteenth century at least thirty or forty times to bring it to the present standard.¹ We cannot, therefore, obtain any satisfactory results by a comparison between the conditions of the fourteenth century and those of the nineteenth; but some light may be thrown upon the inquiry by an examination of the relative conditions developed in the former period, without reference to the latter. Although we cannot determine with accuracy how much any given sum in Chaucer's time would represent in our own, we may form a sufficient estimate of Chaucer's circumstances from contemporary data.

The salary of the chief judges in the fourteenth century was 40*l.* a-year, and that of the puisne judges, with some variations, was 26*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* If, as has been conjectured, the judges had perquisites in addition to their salaries, these sums do not exhibit the full value of their offices; but they furnish, nevertheless, a clue to the relative circumstances of different classes. Maids of honour were pensioned with annuities equal to one-fourth of the salary of a puisne judge; the court physician received a pension of 100*l.* a-year, and an apothecary, who had attended the King in a dangerous illness, sixpence *per diem*. Sir Edward Montagu had a pension of 100*l.* a-year; and the Duke of Brabant of 1500*l.* Descending to the wages of the lower classes, as a further test of comparative values, we find that 1*d.*, 2*d.*, and 3*d.* a-day was paid to labourers and handicraftsmen—amounts much in excess of the ratio of payments made to persons in a higher station of life. The result, so far as Chaucer is

¹ Bishop Fleetwood's *Chronicum Preciosum* supplies the details of prices from which the comparison may be made. In 1336 wheat was 2*s.* a quarter, in 1359 it rose to the unprecedented price of 26*s.*, but in two years afterwards it fell again to 2*s.*, at which price it appears to have continued for several years. In 1389, barley was 1*s.*; and in 1390, a stone of wool 3*s.* The price of a fat ox in 1336 was 6*s.* 8*d.*, and in 1343 two oxen 16*s.* A cow 5*s.*, two hens 1*d.*, a hog 1*s.* 6*d.*, a horse about 40*s.*, a gallon of white wine 6*d.*, of red wine 4*d.*, and a ton of wine about 4*l.*, are amongst the prices quoted in Chaucer's time. The reader who desires to follow up the inquiry may be referred to Godwin's *Life of Chaucer*, ii. 329-38, and *The Retrospective Review*, ix. 189-90.

concerned, shows that, whatever may be the nominal value at which we should rate his income according to our standard, it was fully equal to the position of a gentleman in his own time. His pensions, exclusive of his offices, ranged for many years with the salaries of the Chief Baron of the Exchequer and the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas; and if we add to the income he derived from these sources as much more from the responsible employments in which he was engaged, we may reasonably conclude that, with the exception of the interval of reverse that ensued upon the loss of his offices and the sale of his pensions, he was for the greater part of his life in the enjoyment of no inconsiderable independence. The prosperity which had been interrupted by these circumstances happily returned to brighten the close of his career.

In 1398, another grant of wine was bestowed upon him—a ton annually, equal to about 4*l.* a-year; and in the following year Henry IV., the son of his deceased patron, the Duke of Lancaster, four days after he ascended the throne, conferred upon him a grant of 26*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* a year, in addition to the annuity of 20*l.* bestowed by Richard II. This grant is dated on the 3rd of October, 1399. Chaucer was now seventy-one years of age; and the royal bounty came in time to console the last year of his life.

It has been generally believed that Chaucer latterly resided at Donington Castle, near Newbury, in Berkshire. This tradition, acquiring various circumstantial embellishments in its descent, has been repeated by several writers;¹ but, even

¹ The earliest notice of Chaucer's residence at Donington occurs in Camden's *Britannica*. The reference is slight, and inexact. Speght copies it, and adds an allusion to an oak, which he designates as Chaucer's oak. Evelyn and Ashmole faithfully record the oak, the latter augmenting the stream of particulars by calling the poet 'Sir Geoffrey Chaucer,' and saying that he composed many of his celebrated pieces under the oak. Mr. Godwin improves upon these details by telling us that the Duke of Lancaster purchased the castle, and bestowed it upon Chaucer, being 'determined, in the feudal sense, to ennoble him!' although he elsewhere suggests that 'the circumstances of Chaucer himself might be considered as rendering it some-

if Chaucer's necessities throughout the period when he is supposed to have kept up that costly establishment were not conclusive against its probability, it is discredited by other circumstances. Donington Castle was built by Sir Richard Abberbury, who was in possession of it in 1392. It afterwards became the property of Sir John Phelip, the first husband of Chaucer's grand-daughter. This gentleman died in 1415; and there is no evidence of any previous connexion of any member of Chaucer's family with Donington Castle, nor is there any ground for supposing that Sir John Phelip's tenure commenced till after Chaucer's death. Upon the subsequent marriage of Sir John Phelip's widow, it passed into the possession of her second husband, the Duke of Suffolk.

The story of a residence in Berkshire is further shown to be groundless by the ascertained fact that Chaucer was unquestionably living in London during the last three years of his life, and that on Christmas Eve, 1399, he entered upon the lease of a house in Westminster for a term of fifty-three years at the annual rent of 2*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* Had he been residing in Berkshire, it is not likely that at his advanced age he would have come up to London, and encumbered himself with another establishment. The tenement was situated in the Garden of the Chapel of the Blessed Mary of Westminster, said to be very nearly the same spot on which Henry the Seventh's Chapel stands; and it was demised to Chaucer by Robert Hermodsworth, a monk, with the consent of the Abbot and convent of that place. The stipulations of the lease provided that if the rent ran into arrear for fifteen days, the lessor should have power to distrain; and that if the tenant died during the term of the lease, the premises should revert to the Custos of the Chapel. The latter contingency happened within the first year of the occupancy of the tenement. Chaucer died on the 25th October, 1400, at the age of seventy-two, and was buried in Westminster Abbey.

what improbable that he had made such an acquisition toward the close of his life.'

We have an interesting evidence of the tranquillity and resignation of Chaucer's last hours in the little poem beginning—

Flie fro the prease, and dwell with soothfastnesse,
which he is said to have composed on his death-bed;¹ and if the concluding passage of *The Canterbury Tales* may be considered genuine, Chaucer not only looked back with regret upon certain parts of his writings, but expressed his desire to suppress them in some formal retraction, of which no trace has been recovered.² He is said by some writers to have been buried in the Cloisters,³ and afterwards removed to the Chapel, but this statement is shown to be erroneous by Caxton. The following lines, from an epitaph by Stephanus Surigonus, of Milan, were originally inscribed on a slab placed on a pillar near his grave:⁴—

Galfridus Chaucer vates, et fama poesis
Maternæ, hac sacra sum tumulatus humo.

In 1556, the present monument of grey marble was erected by Mr. Nicholas Brigham, with the subjoined inscription, now nearly defaced, and a full-length of Chaucer, the head, costume, and attitude of which are taken from Occleve's portrait:—

M. S.
QUI FUIT ANGLORUM VATES TER MAXIMUS OLIM,
GALFRIDUS CHAUCER CONDITUR HOC TUMULO;
ANNUM SI QUÆRAS DOMINI, SI TEMPORA VITÆ
ECCE NOTÆ SUBSUNT, QUÆ TIBI CUNCTA NOTANT.
25 OCTOBRIS 1400.
ÆRUMNARUM REQUIES MORS.
N. BRIGHAM HOS FECIT MUSARUM NOMINE SUMPTUS
1556.

¹ The poem is entitled, *Gode Counsaile of Chaucer*; and in a MS. in the Cottonian library the following words were found inserted before the title;—‘A Balade made by Geffrey Chaucer upon his dethe bedde leying in his grete anguyssse.’ Upon this authority the statement rests. The MS. (Otho, A xviii.) on which it was written was destroyed by a fire in which many volumes of the Cottonian library were consumed.

² See note at the end of *The Canterbury Tales*.

³ Fox's *Acts and Monuments*.

⁴ Leland says they were put up by Caxton, at whose request they were written. The statement of the érection of a tomb earlier than that placed over the grave by Mr. Brigham is not entitled to credit.

Attached to the tomb, probably on a ledge of brass, were these verses, which have long disappeared:—

*Si rogites quis eram, forsan te fama docebit
Quod si fama negat, mundi quia gloria transit
Hæc monumenta lege.*

Chaucer had two sons, Thomas and Lewis, the latter, to whom the treatise on the astrolabe was addressed, is supposed to have died in his youth. The former married Matilda, the second daughter and co-heiress of Sir John Burghersh, by whom he acquired large estates in Oxfordshire and other counties. In addition to grants and offices conferred upon him by John of Gaunt, he was appointed Chief Butler to Richard II., a situation which he continued to hold, with a short intermission, under the three succeeding sovereigns. Henry IV. appointed him Constable of Wallingford Castle, and Steward of the Honours of Wallingford and St. Valery, and of the Chiltern Hundreds; and the Queen granted him the farm of the manors of Woodstock, Hauburgh, Wotton, and Stonfield, with the hundred of Wotton, which, after her Majesty's death, the King confirmed to him for life. He represented Oxfordshire in Parliament for several years between 1402 and 1429, and was chosen Speaker of the Commons in 1414; and in the same year was appointed Commissioner to treat of Henry V.'s marriage with Katherine of France. He was present at the battle of Agincourt, and served in most of the expeditions under Henry V. In the following reign he was appointed a member of the King's Council; the Duchess of York selected him as one of her executors; and several notices occur of the important employments in which he was engaged. He died in 1434. His only child, Alice, was married, first to John Philip, who died without issue, and afterwards to the Duke of Suffolk (attainted and beheaded in 1450), by whom she had three children. She died in 1475, and, adds Sir Harris Nicolas, from whose careful biography these particulars have been collected, her issue

having failed, the descendants of the poet are presumed to be extinct.¹

The most authentic description of the person of Chaucer is that which is given in the words of the host of the Tabard, when he calls upon him for his story. It may be inferred that at this time Chaucer had grown somewhat corpulent, as the host, who was 'a large man,' banters him upon having a waist as well shaped as his own; but it is evident that his features were still small and fair, and wore that thoughtful expression which is conspicuous in his portrait. The host also notices his habit of abstraction, which is again alluded to in *The House of Fame*, where he is described sitting at his book till his look becomes dazed. In company he seems to have been retired in his manner, and, as may be gathered from several allusions, to have been generally absorbed in contemplation. Although, he tells us, he lived 'as a hermit,' he hints that he by no means practised abstinence when he went into society. The mixture of gravity and sweetness in Occleve's portrait conveys the perfect image of a character not less remarkable for its rare combination of power and sympathy, than for the variety of accomplishments by which it was graced.

¹ The eldest son of the Duchess of Suffolk married the Princess Elizabeth Plantagenet, sister of Edward IV., whose eldest son, created Earl of Lincoln, was declared by Richard III. heir apparent to the throne, in the event of the death of the Prince of Wales without issue; 'so that,' observes Sir Harris Nicolas, 'there was strong probability of the great great grandson of the poet succeeding to the crown.' The Earl of Lincoln was slain at the battle of Stoke in 1487.

INTRODUCTION.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER is properly designated the *Father of English Poetry*. He acquires his right to that title not only on the ground of being our earliest poet, but because the foundations he laid still support the fabric of our poetical literature, and will outlast the vicissitudes of taste and language. His greatest contemporaries and successors have recognized and confirmed his claim to this distinction. Lydgate calls him the 'chief poete of Bretayne,' and the 'lode-sterre' of our language, and says that he was the first to distil and rain the gold dewdrops of speech and eloquence into our tongue; Occleve calls him 'the fynder of our fayre langage;' Roger Ascham describes him as the 'English Homer,' and considers 'his sayinges to have as much authority as eyther Sophocles or Euripides in Greke;' and Spenser speaks of him as 'the pure well-head of poetry,' and 'the well of English undefiled.' Poet, soldier, and diplomatist, and master of the philosophy, science, and divinity of his time, the versatility of his genius is not more remarkable than the practical judgment he displayed in its employment. With a complete command of the springs of universal interest, the tragical and the humorous, the solemn and the gay, the sublime and the grotesque, he applied his knowledge of life and nature, his consummate art, the copious resources of an imagination that seemed incapable of exhaustion, and a power of expression as extensive as the empire of his genius, to the creation of works which, while they reflect in vivid colours the features of his own time, possess also an enduring value for all time to come. This is not the least striking aspect of the labours of a poet who flourished five hundred years ago, before books

were printed, or a reading public existed. Others who have written since, in a spirit and an idiom more accessible to the popular understanding, have passed into oblivion; but Chaucer still keeps his place. The modes and usages he portrayed have long since vanished; yet his pictures retain their original freshness and fascination. The language in which he wrote has long ceased to be the language of the people; yet the eager student conquers its structural difficulties with delight to enter upon the treasures it throws open to him.

The peculiar interest of Chaucer's poetry arises not only from its intrinsic merit, but from the singularly clear and full idea it conveys of a state of society for which modern experience furnishes no parallel, while, at the same time, it is pregnant with elements of thought which exert an influence even in our own day. A close observer of character, and of all those fugitive traits that mark and indicate its individual peculiarities, Chaucer has adopted in *The Canterbury Tales* a plan that enables him to depict almost every class of society, and which also combines in itself the various kinds of composition employed as the vehicles of popular beliefs and feelings in the Middle Ages. From his works may be learned much more satisfactorily than from the chronicles of his contemporaries, or the more elaborate compilations of later historians, the modes of thought, habits, and manners which prevailed in the reigns of Edward III. and his immediate successors; the era in which the Norman and Saxon races became fused, and our language and social institutions assumed forms that have descended with some modifications to the present time. A strong government had at length secured internal peace; the supremacy of law over brute force was established; a native literature was initiated; and commerce and the arts of life began to flourish. Society was preparing for an advanced stage in its progress; the old traditions were insensibly losing their ascendancy; and new views and principles were in course of development. These mutations are reflected with extraordinary fidelity in

Chaucer's poetry; nor can we obtain elsewhere so close a view of the immediate effects they produced.

The special character of the middle ages may be traced to the national peculiarities of the Northern races who supplanted the Roman Empire, and set up their stronger and less corrupt barbarism on the ruins of the ancient and decayed civilization. Classical literature, embodying the old idolatry, with all its hideous crimes and abuses, its Eleusian mysteries and gladiatorial games, was swept away by the victorious hordes, as being unfit for the study of Christian men, and unworthy of their more manly taste. To supply its place they set about the task of forming a literature of their own; assigning a paramount importance to metaphysical investigations, and, above all, to inquiries into the nature of the Deity and the human soul, and their relations to each other. In such studies the Teutonic mind found a congenial pursuit, and displayed an unrivalled subtlety.

The schoolmen, adapting their themes to the predominant work of the age, lectured earnestly to thousands of students who found in the universities and monasteries retreats where alone they could enjoy repose and security. Here Abelard, Thomas Aquinas, and Duns Scotus devoted themselves to abstruse speculations; while outside the cloisters society was convulsed by the interminable wars of the great feudal vassals, who, although acknowledging a common suzeraineté, were in fact sovereigns within their own territories.

Poetry was one of the natural products of this state of things. Familiarity with the scenes of violence incidental to such circumstances furnished abundant materials, which the imagination, nurtured in solitude, idealized into those lyrical ballads and metrical romances which constituted the popular lore of the middle ages. There was then no printing press to multiply and disseminate the creations of the muse; and oral recitation anticipated the advent of the broadsheet and the book. Hence the banquets of the nobility and the merrymakings of the lower orders were always enlivened by the presence of the minstrel, jongleur, gestour, gleeman,

or minne-singer, who, like the reciters of the Homeric ballads, related in poetical diction, and to a musical accompaniment, the exciting achievements, perilous adventures, and chivalrous loves of their heroes.

Songs and metrical legends marked the infancy of this great movement; but as mental education advanced, the metaphysical and religious tone of the age created a demand, even at these festal entertainments, for disquisitions on the properties of spiritual essences and the grounds of moral duty. Thus, as we learn from Erasmus in his Treatise on Preaching entitled *Ecclesiastes*, the jongleurs, who rapidly caught up every new phase of progress and opinion, dexterously varied their lighter subjects by the delivery of discourses, committed to memory, on topics of the highest import, such as the mystery of the Trinity, and other fundamental doctrines of the Church. Nothing, indeed, strikes the student of mediæval literature with so much surprise on his first acquaintance with it, as the remarkable manner in which Christianity enters into and directs all the ideas of the people of those ages. That particular form in which they embodied their faith is found interwoven with all their social relations, and regulating even their mode of counting time, their business, and their amusements. A religion so deeply seated in the daily details of life became inevitably corrupted by popular superstitions. The universal belief in the supernatural, in the power of Divine grace, in the reality of the conflict continually going on between good and evil, and in the direct interference of Providence on the side of virtue, is evinced in the predilection for those religious fictions which represented faith and unbelief, Christianity and error, under a masquerade of actual personages. Most of the legends of the Saints are evidently pure allegories, invented by lecturers for the purpose of impressing particular points of theology on the minds of their pupils, in the manner of a *memoria technica*; and even when founded on real circumstances, they were varied by each succeeding narrator according to his own fancy, or the instruction he desired to convey.

Turning to the reverse of this picture, we find, as might be expected, that the relaxation of a people whose minds were thus highly strung took a direction of singular grotesqueness. They endeavoured to relieve the absorbing interest of the subjects that mainly engrossed their thoughts by contemplating them in ludicrous, and, sometimes, incoherent combinations. Their chief pastimes consisted in the burlesque of their gravest convictions. This is not the form in which the gaiety of frivolous minds ever displays itself. The well-bred, and easy, and even serious licentiousness of Wycherley's comedies delighted the courtiers of Charles II.; but the age of Bernard, and Thomas Aquinas, and Francis of Assissi, sought a vent for its hilarity in the extravagant drolls of the 'boy-bishop' and the 'Abbot of Misrule.' Coleridge profoundly observes, that 'farce,' which is one form of the grotesque, 'often borders on tragedy,' and that it 'is nearer tragedy in its essence than comedy is.' The close alliance, in the middle ages, between the profoundest speculations and the broadest absurdities forcibly illustrates the truth of his remark.

It seemed desirable to glance at these characteristics as a necessary introduction to the consideration of the structure and aims of *The Canterbury Tales*, in which the several species of poetry indigenous to the mediæval period, are not only combined and exemplified, but exhibited in a dramatic form which brings out the express features of the recitations of the gestour. The tale of chivalry, the moral and theological treatise, the legend of the Saints, the covert satire, and the humorous apologue, are all reproduced in his pages, treated, however, with a taste and power which will be looked for in vain amongst the merely popular poems of that, or, indeed, of any other, age.

In Chaucer's poetry we have a true image of these varieties, brought to perfection by a genius that transcended its originals. His method of proceeding in *The Canterbury Tales* is the most effective that could be devised for transmitting to subsequent ages an accurate expression of the

social and moral development of his own. He never generalizes—he never falls into disquisitions—he never draws conclusions. He avoids all modes of treatment that might afterwards become wearisome or unintelligible; and, descending into the common life of the day, he shows us, as it were, the spirit of transition in actual operation amongst the different classes of the people, modifying their customs and opinions, drawing out into full play the salient points of the national character, and colouring even individual peculiarities to the most trivial details, which, in this aspect, acquire a special historical value. The humanity he thus imparts to his subjects invests them with a permanent interest, which neither the lapse of time, nor the revolutions of language, can impair or render obsolete; and the instruction which, in another shape, would become dry and heavy, is here made to assume the most attractive forms.

In no respect is he a more faithful interpreter of the spirit of the time than in his manner of treating ecclesiastical questions. The reign of Edward III. was the harbinger of the great ecclesiastical revolution of the sixteenth century. Not only the acts passed in this reign, the statutes of Provisors and of Mortmain, but the petitions presented by the Commons against the interference of the Pope in the internal management of the Anglican Church, are indications of the formation of a strong party whose object was to effect a reaction in resistance to the excessive temporal power which circumstances had thrown into the hands of the clergy. With this party, sustained by the zeal and power of John of Gaunt, the King's younger son, Chaucer was intimately connected by family ties. It consisted of the high nobility, and such of the middle classes as were swayed by their example or authority. The Crown, on the other hand, sought to strengthen itself by a close alliance with the heads of the church, especially the religious orders, from among whom its ministers were chosen, and through whom it wielded a complete control over the lower classes of the population. A reference to Richard of Devizes, Geoffrey of Vinsauf,

Mathew Paris, and others of our old chroniclers, now within the reach of all readers, will abundantly confirm this position. The King's party consisted chiefly of the monks, with their extensive granges and farms, tilled and inhabited by stout yeomen, the very pith and marrow of our militia; and the friars, secure of a ready access to every cottage and conscience in England; both recruited from the lower and middle classes, and both comprising in their ranks men who, from their education, were skilled not only in theology, but in the arts of diplomacy and administration. Such was the only body in the state upon whose services the sovereign could rely as a check upon the feudal barons, whose efforts were, of course, always tending towards the establishment of a pure aristocracy. This tendency the Crown was obliged to counteract by playing off one great feudal vassal against another, and the clergy against all—a policy which, in the end, made the clergy hateful to all. John and Henry III., indeed, attempted to play the political game of chess without their knights and bishops, but were checkmated.

The aristocratical party was naturally opposed to the ascendancy of the clergy, and neglected no opportunities of arraigning their conduct, in the hope of ultimately forcing the Crown to select its ministers from among the feudal barons themselves. In these assaults upon the clergy, John of Gaunt and his supporters derived important assistance from Wickliffe, whose tenets—that tithes and episcopacy are unlawful, that subjects are not bound to obey princes who are living in a state of mortal sin, and that patrons ought to resume church property from clergymen whose lives or doctrines they disapprove—were found to be powerful weapons in political warfare.

Chaucer's connexion with John of Gaunt, therefore, explains much of his treatment of ecclesiastical persons in his poetry; his bantering censure of the monks and friars, the most learned, and influential, and best organized body of churchmen, and, consequently, the most troublesome to his party; and

his praise of the poor, and, comparatively, illiterate and isolated country parsons, from whom it had nothing to fear. Yet, notwithstanding the gusto with which he turns the religious orders into ridicule, there is no indication of his having embraced the tenets of Wickliffe. It has been thought that in his character of a country parson he intended to record his admiration of that active reformer; but there is not a single point of resemblance between them. Chaucer's model parson is not a controversialist; he disclaims all school-learning; he lives upon his benefice, and occupies himself with the care of his parishioners; he does not hold sinecures in cathedrals; and he delivers an orthodox discourse upon the sacrament of penance according to the orthodoxy of the times. Wickliffe's life displays a very complete contradiction to all this. He was everything that the parson was not, and the reverse of everything that he was. He was a bold and indefatigable controversialist; he was Professor of Theology and Warden of Canterbury Hall, Oxford; he held the living of Lutterworth, and a prebendal stall in the collegiate church of Westbury; and he denied the sacramental efficacy of penance, and the expediency of confession to a priest. The antagonism is perfect; and if Chaucer meant to apply the sketch to Wickliffe, it must have been as a masked sarcasm and not as a panegyric.

The English language, like everything else at this period, was exhibiting signs of change. Old forms were beginning to be disused, and new elements to be introduced into its structure. The notion that Chaucer was the first who adopted French forms and idioms is founded on a slight acquaintance with previous, or contemporary, literature. That the pure Saxon lingered for a long time among the lower orders in remote districts is shown by our provincial dialects of the present day, which still retain incontestable traces of a Saxon origin; and by the no less striking fact that most of our current household terms, and the names of most articles of utility, are derived from the same source, while the bulk of the class of words that represent luxuries and superfluities come from the

Norman stock. The foundations of the language, so to speak, are Saxon, and its graces French. In Chaucer's time, and long afterwards, this distinction was much more clearly defined than it is now; the general diffusion of education, and the modern facilities of intercourse, having swept away the landmarks that formerly separated the different classes of society, and isolated the different sections of the kingdom. It may be said, in a broad sense, that when Chaucer wrote there were two languages—the language of the Court, and of educated people; and the language of the lower orders. The contrast between them was not that which exists between refinement and vulgarity, or even between knowledge and ignorance; it was of a radical character, and entered into the formation of both. We find the two languages more or less influencing the English style down to the reign of Henry VIII.; and furnishing the key by which we can at once understand why contemporary writers should appear to belong to different ages, and why Surrey should be perfectly intelligible in our day, while Skelton cannot be read without the help of a glossary.

Chaucer's language is that of the good society in which he lived, and into which a large accession of Norman blood, usages, and idioms had been infused. That in availing himself of these advantages, and not affecting the archaisms of the lower orders, he did wisely for his own fame, and for the advancement of his native language, need not be insisted upon. The carpenter who should choose to do his work with the axe alone, when he might also have the assistance of a plane and saw, would not display much fitness for his vocation.

‘It may be doubted,’ observes Coleridge, ‘whether a composite language like the English is not a happier instrument of expression than a homogeneous one like the German. We possess a wonderful richness and variety of modified meanings in our Saxon and Latin quasi-synonymes, which the Germans have not. For ‘the pomp and *prodigality* of heaven,’ the German must have said the ‘*spendthriftness*.’” The

actual process of enriching our language by the naturalisation of the Norman and the Anglo-Saxon, and the gradual rejection of the original forms of both, is palpably developed in the writings of Chaucer, where we find the ancient inflections and the modern simple form frequently used indifferently in the same line. The modern word is thus at once referred to its French or Anglo-Saxon original by the peculiarities of its structure or pronunciation. A full exposition of the subject would in effect amount to the compilation of a grammar; but it will be sufficient for all present purposes to remark that the final letter *e*, the doubling of consonants, and other particulars in which the orthography differs from that of the present forms are by no means arbitrary, though not always strictly maintained, and that their omission in some cases, where they ought properly to be found, is to be attributed to the carelessness of copyists, or to the incipient use of the simpler forms, or to the exercise of a poetical licence for the sake of the metre. To these causes of confusion Chaucer himself adverts in the *Troilus and Creseide*:—

And for there is so great diversite
In English, and in writing of our tongue,
So pray I God that none miswrite thee,
Ne thee *mismetre* for default of tongue—

words which imply that even in his own time the metre of his poetry depended upon some nicety of orthography and pronunciation—one, amongst many reasons, why any attempt to substitute the modern for the ancient orthography is incompatible with the preservation of the metre and the structure of the language. A few instances will give the reader a general idea of the nature of these changes and inflections, which the smallest acquaintance with German will enable him to apply in almost all cases.

To begin with substantives: they are in many instances inflected in the oblique case and plural number, as in German; and where, in Anglo-Saxon, they ended in *a*, they end in *e*, pronounced; as, for Anglo-Saxon *hunta* (hunter) Chaucer writes *hunté*. In the mouths of the lower characters

especially the Anglo-Saxon form of the first person singular is preserved; as *so the ich*, sometimes written *so theeche*, so may I thrive. This is German.¹ *Thou* takes the form of an affix to the verb, as *seistow*, sayest thou, *canstow*, canst thou. For *it*, the Anglo-Saxon form, *hit*, is sometimes used; for she (German, *sie*), *scho*, which is the Anglo-Saxon form *heo*, with a hissing aspirate; for her, *hir*, the final *e* of the Anglo-Saxon being dropped; for their (German, *ihr*) *hiré*, which comes nearer the Anglo-Saxon *hira*. The forms *wha* and *whilk*, for who and which (Anglo-Saxon, *hwa*, *hwylc*; German, *welcher*), are used provincially by the Yorkshire *clerks*: *swilk* [*so-like*, Goth. *swa-leiks*], for such. The adjective appears to be sometimes inflected both in words of Anglo-Saxon and in those of French origin. Thus (vol. i. p. 74), *smale* is the plural form of the adjective *smal* (Anglo-Saxon, *smæl*, singular; *smæle*, plural.)¹

But it is in the verb that the old inflections are chiefly preserved; differing, indeed, in many respects from the Anglo-Saxon, and being often dropped altogether, as in the modern forms. Thus (vol. i. p. 74), *slepen* is the plural of the Present indicative of *to slepen*, and *seeken* the infinitive of the verb; but in three lines further on we have an approach to the modern form in the dropping of the final *n* in the word *wende* (old form *wenden*); and *for to seeke* (old form *seeken*). A remarkable example of this occurs where *seyde* rhymes to *leyden*, showing that the final old and new forms were sometimes indifferently used or omitted in writing, and were probably much sooner dropped in speaking. The termination *n* of the plural of the Present indicative differs from the Anglo-Saxon, which ends in *ath*; but this form is retained in some cases, as in vol. i. p. 147; *you liketh* (unless this be put for *it you liketh*), and again, *ye loveth*.¹ The imperative always ends in *eth*. What is the exact force of the particle *y* prefixed to the verb seems now impossible to discover. It is generally the sign of the Past participle, as from *clepen*, to call, we have *yclept*, called; as in German, from *loben*, to praise, *gelobt*, praised. But in German, Anglo-Saxon, and

¹ See Notes, p. 70.

in Chaucer's English, these analogous particles are prefixed to some verbs throughout their moods, while they evidently form no part of the root. Mr. Wright has noticed, as a caution against conjectural emendations, the errors in orthography into which Tyrwhitt has been betrayed by his ignorance of the inflections of the irregular, or, more properly, the strong verbs, in the Teutonic languages. For instance, in the verb to give, the imperfect singular is *I gaf*; plural, *we gave* (old form *gaven*); in such cases, Tyrwhitt has invariably used the plural form with a subject in the singular. It will be seen that these inflexions are identical with the German. *Geben* to give, *Ich gab*, I gave, *Wir gaben*, we gave. The inflexion of the regular verb in the imperfect is, for example, I lernede, thou lernedest, he lernede. Plural, lerneden; but the final *n* is often omitted. The reader will also remark the German form *sch*, for which *sh* has been substituted in modern English.

The reduplication of the final consonant and the addition of the letter *e* is the adverbial form; thus, *longe* or *lange* occurs as an adverb of time formed from the adjective *long*, *withinne*, and *inne*, as the adverbial form of the preposition *within* and *in*. *Needes*, necessarily, and *thankes*, gratuitously, are examples of the mode of forming adverbs from substantives.

But though the foundation and construction of the language is purely Teutonic, it was in Chaucer's time assimilating many Anglo-Norman words. It had not yet acquired the strong accentuation of the modern English, which, Erasmus says, makes foreigners suppose when they hear us speak that we are barking. The modern German is accented much more evenly than the English; and the genius of the French language is to accent all syllables equally; but if there be any emphasis at all it is on the last syllable. This rule is strictly applicable to all words of French origin in Chaucer. Thus, the following words, and all of like derivation, must be pronounced as marked; coráge, viáge, viságe,

mariáge; honoúr, adventúre, mysaventúre, armúre, clamóur; condítioún, questioún, resón; maniér, matiér, coursér; hazárd, plesaúnce, remembránce; tormént, &c. The final *é* of the feminine adjective in French is also in some cases retained, as *Seynte Frideswide*.

In short, the construction and pronunciation of the languages which were then undergoing the process of amalgamation were still in a great measure retained; but they already showed symptoms of change, that change consisting chiefly in the dropping of the terminations, in accordance with the principle which then began to show itself in our idiom, of throwing back the accent as far as possible. The final syllable, when it did not form part of the root, would thus be at first pronounced slightly, next dropped altogether from pronunciation, and would finally disappear from the written language. Latin and Greek have undergone the very same process in their transformation into Italian and Romanic.

Intimately connected with the orthography and pronunciation is the vexed question of the rules of Chaucer's metre. The two theories on this subject are thus stated by Mr. Hallam:—‘It had been supposed to be proved by Tyrwhitt, that Chaucer's lines are to be read metrically, in ten or eleven syllables, like the Italian, and, as I apprehend, the French of his time. For this purpose it is necessary to presume that many terminations, now mute, were syllabically pronounced; and where verses prove refractory after all our endeavours, Tyrwhitt has no scruple in declaring them corrupt. It may be added that Gray, before the appearance of Tyrwhitt's essay on the versification of Chaucer, had adopted without hesitation the same hypothesis. But, according to Dr. Nott, the verses of Chaucer, and of all his successors down to Surrey, are merely rhythmical, to be read by cadence, and admitting of considerable variety in the number of syllables, though ten may be the more frequent. In the manuscripts of Chaucer the line is always broken by a *cæsura* in the middle, which is pointed out by a *virgule*; and this is pre-

served in the early editions, down to that of 1532. They come nearer, therefore, to the short Saxon line, differing chiefly by the alternate rhyme, which converts two verses into one. He maintains that a great many lines of Chaucer cannot be read metrically, though harmonious as verses of cadence. This rhythmical measure he proceeds to show in Occleve, Lydgate, Hawes, Barclay, Skelton, and even Wyatt, and thus concludes that it was first abandoned by Surrey.¹ However ingeniously this theory may be stated, most people will agree with Mr. Hallam in the opinion that it is founded on too narrow a definition of metre. He justly observes that in Chaucer's versification 'we never fail to recognize a uniformity of measure, which the use of nearly equipollent feet cannot, on the strictest metrical principles, be thought to impair.' If an exactly equal number of syllables in every line be essential to metre, Homer and Virgil's hexameters and the song of *Comus* are not metrical; a conclusion so contrary to all received notions as to induce a suspicion that there is some fallacy at the bottom of Dr. Nott's theory. If we go back to first principles, it will not be difficult to discover where this fallacy lies.

The object of all metre is to produce a rhythm, or cadence, to which the voice in reading or singing can adapt itself. This regular cadence may be produced by making the verses consist of an exactly equal number of syllables with the accent falling on the even ones, to which plan Dr. Nott would confine the term *metre*. But it may be much better produced by composing the verses of an equal number of equipollent, though not equisyllabic, feet, a principle upon which all the classical metres are founded. Nobody who can enjoy Milton's exquisitely musical rhythm will ever believe that his manner of composition was to count the syllables on his fingers. As Mr. Hallam well observes, the occasional occurrence of an anapæst in the place of an iambus, so far from derogating from correctness, adds great spirit and

¹ *Introduction to the Literature of Europe*, vol. i. p. 420.

beauty to the metre. He might have included in the same category a still greater irregularity, the substituting one strongly accented syllable at the beginning of a line, or at the cæsura, for an iambus, which, so far from being a defect, is an aberration that imparts wonderful spirit and beauty to the song of *Comus*—

The star that bids the shepherd fold
Now the top of heaven doth hold, &c.

In the second of these lines the word *Now* takes the place of an iambus. In short, it may be laid down as a principle of all metres that the number of accented syllables in lines intended to correspond with each other admits of no irregularity; but that unaccented syllables may be grouped round them, as it were, of course within certain limits, of which the ear is the best judge. This is also the principle of the Anglo-Saxon metres as shown by Professor Erasmus Raske in his valuable *Anglo-Saxon Grammar*, and, it may be added, of all metres whatsoever, though some admit of greater variety in the number and arrangement of the unaccented syllables than others.

It has been seen that Dr. Nott lays much stress upon a virgule being found in the manuscripts to mark the cæsura, as a proof that the verse is not metrical. But this virgule is a musical, and not a metrical, sign, and was intended as a guide to the singer to mark where the first strain of the recitative ended, and the next began. It was used for this purpose in the Latin Psalms, formerly sung in churches, and its place is supplied in the *Book of Common Prayer* by a colon. Its use is an interesting example of the manner in which poetry was formerly sung; and it signified nothing more. But even if it had been intended to mark the cæsura, or pause, the regularity of its recurrence would not have been inconsistent with the metrical structure of the verse. In many classical metres, as pentameter and Sapphic, the place of the cæsura never varies; it varies least in Pope, whose metre is more regular than that of any of our poets, and most in Milton, the melody of whose verse depends

chiefly upon his cadence, or rhythm; and, notwithstanding the virgule, many passages might be quoted from Chaucer in which great spirit and vivacity are obtained by the judicious variation in the position of the cæsura.

It would carry us far beyond our present purpose to enter at length upon the question raised by Dr. Nott's use of the terms metre and rhythm, except so far as it concerns the verse of Chaucer. Dr. Nott's object was to prove that Surrey was the first English poet whose versification was governed by syllabic laws, and that the versification of all preceding writers was unrestrained by any syllabic laws whatever. This position is perfectly clear and intelligible; and constitutes, in fact, the real point at issue. But the subject assumes a new aspect when Dr. Nott calls the former species of versification metrical, and the latter rhythmical. The objection to his employment of these terms is, that they are illogical, because they do not express the *essential difference* between the two species. That there is a difference is obvious; but these terms describe a distinction without a difference, unless it is to be admitted that metre can be produced without rhythm, or rhythm without metrical principles of some kind. It is unnecessary to repeat, that metre and rhythm are by no means identical, or convertible, terms, and that they express different things; but the things they express co-exist, and cannot be separated from each other.¹

Adopting the terms in a limited sense, metre as a test applicable only to syllables, and rhythm as a test applicable only to sounds, the question resolves itself into a simple form: Is Chaucer's poetry metrical or rhythmical? The answer is, that it is both. We find in Chaucer not only the most perfect examples of strict syllabification, but by a careful attention to the grammatical structure of his language, we shall find that strict syllabification is the rule, and not the exception, of his verse.

The regularity of the strictly syllabic lines is much

¹ [At the present day Dr. Nott's theories are hardly worth detailed discussion, and are certainly not to be accepted.—W. W. S.]

more apparent throughout than the art with which the lines, not governed by syllabic quantities, are made to preserve their true rhythmical proportions. The number of long accented syllables in these cases is invariable; but the number of unaccented syllables constantly fluctuates without impairing the melody of the verse. In other words, an anapæst, or other equivalent foot, often occurs, and sometimes, perhaps, an emphatic monosyllable takes the place of an iambus; and a hypercatalectic, or redundant short syllable, is frequently found at the end of a line.

In stating these to be the only irregularities in Chaucer's verse, it should be understood that he must be read like French or German, and the final letter *e* pronounced, although not always. The ear must here be the guide as in French verse. For example, in the two following lines of Boileau the final *e* is pronounced in the word *fertile*, but is quiescent in the words *rare* and *ignore*, because the succeeding word begins with a vowel :—

Rare et fameux esprit, dont la fertile veine
Ignore en ecrivant le travail et la peine.

But in every case, every syllable of words of French extraction, such as *condicioun* must be pronounced, and the accent laid on the last syllable. This is the origin of what has been called by modern metrists the *female* rhyme.

The best way to make Chaucer's system of versification plain to the reader will be to give a few examples of his different metres, and to mark the syllables with the usual long and short signs.

The heroic verse which Chaucer probably first introduced into English, is the prevailing one in *The Canterbury Tales*. In the spirited address of Theseus to Emily in the *Knights Tale*, most of the peculiarities mentioned above will be found to occur.

Sūstȳr, | qūoth hē, | thīs is | mȳ fūl | āssēnt,
With āll | thāvȳs | hēer ōf | mȳ pār | lēmēnt,
Thāt gēn | tīl Pā | lāmōn, | yōur ōw | nē knīght,
Thāt sērv | ēth yōu | wīth hēr | tē, will | ānd mīght.

And ēvēr | hāth dōon, | sȳn fērste | tȳme ȳe | him knēw.

Thāt ȳe | schūl of | yōur grāce | ūpōn | him rēwe,

And tāke | him fōr | yōur hūs | bōnd and | fōr lōrd;

Lēne mē | yōure hānd, | fōr thīs | is ȳure | āccōrd.

* * * * *

Bētwīx | hēm wās | īmāad | ānōn | thē bōnd,

Thāt hīgh | tē mā | trīmōyn | ȳr mā | rīāge,

Bȳ alle | thē cōun | sēil of | thē bā | rōnāge.

In these lines are examples of a foot of three syllables, *and ever*, supplying the place of an iambus; of the final *e* pronounced, and quiescent, as it suits the metre; and of the word *mariage* pronounced as in French. If the following verse be not corrupt, which there is no reason to suppose, the word *than*, an emphatic syllable, at the beginning of a line, does duty for an iambus, as already noticed:—

Thān | is it | wīsdōm | ās thēnk | ēth mē.¹

With exquisite perception of the properties of verse, the poet has chosen for pathetic subjects a modification of the Italian *ottavarima*, which differs from its original in wanting the fifth line. In this verse are composed *Griselde*, *The Legend of St. Cecilia*, *The Tale of the Prioress*, *Troilus and Creseide*, and most of the smaller compositions called ballads. The following example is Constance's touching address to the Virgin, which seems to have suggested Ellen's prayer in *The Lady of the Lake*.

Mōdēr, | qūod shē, | ānd māy | dē brīght, | Mārie,

Sōth is | thāt thūrgh | wōmmān | nēs ēg | gēmēnt

Mānkīnd | wās lōrn, | ānd dāmp | nēd āy | tō dȳe,

Fōr whīch | thȳ chīld | wās ōn | ā crōss | tō-rēnt;

Thȳn blīs | fūl ēy | ghēn sāwh | āl thīs | tōrmēnt;

Thēn nȳs | thēr nōon | cōmpā | rīsōun | bītȳene

Thȳ wō, | ānd ā | nȳ wōo | māy mān | sūstēne.

¹ [The remark is important, and in some instances true; but not here. The right reading is—'as it thenketh me'; and the line is perfect.—W. W. S.]

The only subject for remark here is that the genitive inflection in *womannes* forms a separate syllable, and that *Marie* and *torment*, being French words, are accented on the last syllable.

In the envoye to the tale of *Griselde* is to be found a kind of verse which does not occur in any of the other poems. It consists of six heroic lines rhyming alternately, except the fifth, which has no corresponding rhyme. *The Monke's Tale* is written in a stanza of eight lines, of ten syllables, but very different from the *ottava rima*. The versification of the burlesque on the metrical romance, which the host calls 'rhyme doggerel,' is very commonly met with in poems of that period, and was probably rejected by Chaucer as monotonous and tiresome.

It has been observed that large portions of the *Tale of Melibeus*, though written like prose, are, in fact, blank verse, and may be so read, as in the following example:—

This Melibeus answered anon and said,
What man, quoth he, should of his weeping stint
That hath so great a causé for to weep?

* * *

Prudence answeredé, Certes well I wot
Attempered weeping is no thing defended
To him that sorrowful is, &c.

This is, perhaps, the earliest example of blank verse in this metre in the English language; and it is not the less remarkable because it becomes thus resolved out of prose.

The only remaining kind of metre that claims our attention is that of *The Romance of the Rose*, *The House of Fame*, *Chaucer's Dreame*, and *The Book of the Duchess*. All these are in the verse called octosyllabic, but more properly quadrameter iambic, inasmuch as anapæsts, hypercatalectic syllables, and other irregularities in the number of syllables are of frequent occurrence. In structure and irregularity it resembles the song of *Comus*. The following admirable delineation of the frank and simple manners of a high-bred woman of fashion is taken from *The Book of the*

Duchess, and was intended as a portrait of Blanche, the consort of John of Gaunt.

Thěretō | hěr lōke | wās nōt | āside,
 Ně ōvěr | thwārt būt | bēsēt | sō wēle,
 It drēwe | ānd tōoke | ūp ēve | rỹ dēle
 All | thāt ōn | hěr gān | bēhōld,
 Hěr ēy | ěn sēmed | ānōn | shě wōld
 Hāve mēr | cỹ, (Fōl | lỹ wēn | dēn sō;)
 Būt it | wās něvěr | thě rā | thěr dō.
 It nās | nō cōun | tērfeit | ěd thīng;
 It wās | hěr ōw | ně pūre | lōkīng.¹

The text of Chaucer, which next claims our attention, has, until lately, been considered hopelessly corrupt. His great popularity in some degree contributed to this result. Manuscript copies of his poems were eagerly multiplied in an age when the orthography and pronunciation of English were capricious and unsettled; and each succeeding copyist thought himself at liberty to adapt the original to his own notions of correctness, or to the dialect of his native district. From copies made on these principles were derived the texts of the early editions by Caxton, in 1475, by Wynken de Worde in 1495, by Pynson, Stowe, Thynne, and Speght, who showed, alike by their neglects and their errors, that they were utterly incapable of discriminating between a true and a false reading; and the confusion arising from their incompetence was worse confounded by Urry's conjectural emendations. The next and most successful attempt to render *The Canterbury Tales* popular was made by the late Mr. Tyrwhitt, whose first edition appeared in 1775. His learning, judgment, and patient research, formed a happy contrast to his predecessors. So far as the text was concerned, however, his plan was injudicious. He collated a great number of MSS., but without sufficient attention to their dates, an

¹ The text above used is taken from one of the printed editions, and is probably very incorrect.

indispensable consideration in reference to the language of Chaucer. He appears, also, to have attributed to the early editions by Caxton a degree of authority to which they have no title.¹ In other respects his labours were of unquestionable utility. He rejected ignorant interpolations, made an excellent arrangement of the *Tales*, and in his Dissertation and Notes, notwithstanding that they were founded on an impure text, and an imperfect knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon and Mediæval English, he produced a body of illustra-

¹ Caxton's first edition of *The Canterbury Tales* was one of the earliest books printed in England. As a specimen of typography it is remarkable for clearness and elegance; but the text is valueless, being taken from a MS. abounding in errors. Caxton afterwards brought out a second edition printed from a better MS. in the possession of Mr. William Thynne. Neither of these editions are dated. The first is supposed by Ames to have been printed about 1475 or 1476; the second appears from the preface to have been undertaken six years later. Of the former, only two copies are known to exist; and only one of the latter. *Troilus and Creseide*, *The Book of Fame*, and other pieces were also printed by Caxton. In 1495, Wynken de Worde printed an edition of the *Tales*, founded upon Caxton; the *Troilus and Creseide* in 1517; and the *Assemblee of Foules* in 1530. Richard Pynson published two editions of the *Tales*, the first without a date (conjectured to be 1491), and the second, containing additional pieces, in 1526. He also printed the *Troilus and Creseide*, and *The Book of Fame*. The next edition, collected by Mr. William Thynne, and published by Godfray in 1532, was the first that contained the entire works, with the exception of *The Plowman's Tale*, and was adopted as the basis of most of the subsequent editions. It was reprinted, with the addition of *The Plowman's Tale*, by John Reynes, in 1542. This was followed, in 1561, by an edition, 'with divers addicions,' edited by Stowe. Speght's edition, the most complete that had appeared up to this time, was published in 1598, and reprinted, enlarged and improved, in 1602, and again in 1687. Urry's edition appeared in 1721. *The Canterbury Tales*, 'from the most authentic MSS., and as they are turned into English by the most eminent hands, &c.,' were published in 1740, by Dr. Thomas Morell. This is the edition to which Mr. Tyrwhitt gives the date of 1737, and of which he availed himself largely in his notes and glossary. Mr. Tyrwhitt's edition was published in 1775-8. A second edition was printed by the University of Oxford in 1798; a third in London in 1822; and a fourth in 1845, with a new life by Sir Harris Nicolas, who also edited the rest of the poems. Mr. Wright's edition was originally printed by the Percy Society in 1847; and afterwards republished for general circulation. This catalogue includes only the principal editions. Many other editions appeared in the sixteenth century, but they are for the most part mere reprints.

tive information which must always be valuable to the student.

Mr. Wright, applying the vastly increased resources of modern criticism and philology to the text of *The Canterbury Tales*, has made an important advance in this fundamental particular beyond his predecessors. His plan was exactly the reverse of Tyrwhitt's. Instead of founding his text upon a comparison of MSS. written at different times, and in different places, and frequently corrupted by different dialects, he selected the best manuscript he could find, that which seemed nearest to Chaucer's own time, and most free from clerical errors, and adopted it as the basis of his edition. This MS., a remarkably fine one in the British Museum, he thus describes: 'The Harleian MS., No. 7334, is by far the best MS. of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* I have yet examined, in regard both to antiquity and correctness. The hand writing is one which would at first sight be taken by an experienced scholar for that of the latter part of the fourteenth century, and it must have been written within a few years after 1400, and, therefore, soon after Chaucer's death. The language has very little, if any, appearance of local dialect, and the text is in general extremely good, the variations from Tyrwhitt being usually for the better.'¹

It is proper to observe that, although the Harl. MS. has been adopted as the basis of this text, it has not been implicitly followed in all cases. As Mr. Wright found it necessary to depart occasionally from his original, so, in some instances, the reading of Mr. Tyrwhitt, when it bore internal evidence of authenticity, has been preferred in this edition. A few cases also occur in which the reading of the MS. has been restored, when it was thought that Mr. Wright had rejected it without sufficient reason; but all deviations, either from

¹ [The Harleian MS. is very valuable, but the Ellesmere MS. is now seen to have the highest claim to correctness. The readings of that MS. are mostly to be found in Tyrwhitt's edition, but he does not seem to have always followed it. The text of the Harleian MS. was certainly worth printing, and gives a very fair result.

It must be remembered that the publications of the 'Chaucer Society' have lately cleared up many doubtful points.—W. W. S.]

Mr. Wright's edition, or from the original MS., are pointed out in the foot-notes for the ultimate satisfaction of the reader. Fortunately the text of *The Canterbury Tales* is now so correct as to afford little room for such conjectural emendations as still continue to be applied to the text of Shakespeare; and there can be no hesitation in asserting that a reader of ordinary education, particularly if he have any knowledge of French and German, and will take the trouble to read the first ten pages with a glossary by his side, may be able, without difficulty, to understand and enjoy the whole of Chaucer's poems.

In the notes compiled for this edition free use has been made of the labours of former commentators, their authority being invariably acknowledged, either by a reference, or by initials where a quotation is given in full. Thus, passages extracted from the annotations or criticisms of Speght, Tyrwhitt, or Wright, are distinguished by having affixed to them the letters S., T., or W. Sometimes a difference of opinion has arisen, and, whenever it was considered of sufficient importance, the grounds of dissent are stated.

In addition to the tracks of inquiry previously explored, others have been opened up of interest and utility to the general reader. Much attention, for example, has been bestowed upon the elucidation of involved passages by unravelling their construction, and by pointing out the full force of still existing words which Chaucer has used in an obsolete sense, but which do not come within the scope of a glossary. Beliefs, usages, and principles alluded to in the text, which have now either wholly disappeared, or which yet linger in remote places, or survive unnoticed in modern ceremonies and manners, are explained; and in developing their sources numerous illustrations are drawn from our old metrical romances, ballads, chronicles, and local histories. But, perhaps, the most striking and neglected feature of Chaucer's great poem is to be found in its frequent allusions to the practical theology and ecclesiastical customs of the mediæval Church of England. This part of the subject has

been hitherto entirely passed over, or, at best, only superficially noticed. The deficiency is to some extent supplied by the observations on ecclesiastical affairs introduced into the notes, supported in all instances by direct recurrence to the formularies and books of established authority. The customs of the mediæval Church have been traced, wherever it was possible, to their origin in Scripture, or to the traditions of the early church, and occasionally compared, for the sake of illustration, with the practices of our own day. The numerous references to Scripture have also been verified. Such side-lights as these thrown in upon the text are needless to the scholar; but they will be of some value to the reader who now takes up the book for the first time, by enabling him the more easily to understand the poet's meaning, and to realize the state of society he describes.

The paramount aim throughout has been to render this edition popular in a legitimate sense. Nor have any of the projects, or experiments, which have been suggested from time to time to facilitate the convenience of the general reader, been overlooked. Amongst these, the modernization of Chaucer's orthography—so frequently insisted upon as the only means of bringing him within the comprehension of the great bulk of the reading classes—has received due consideration. The earliest attempt of this nature was made by Dryden, whose example was followed, in a similar spirit, by Pope. How far their versions of Chaucer can be said to exhibit a just reflection of the original it is unnecessary to inquire. They are, in fact, very elaborate paraphrases, in which the idiomatic forms and colours of the old writer vanish in the process of adaptation; and they bear no closer resemblance, in spirit or expression, to Chaucer than Pope's translation bears to Homer. The *Fables* of Dryden are as well known to the mass of the public as any poems in the language; but it may be doubted whether they have increased the desire for a more intimate acquaintance with Chaucer, or contributed to the extension of his fame. On the contrary, they have helped rather to obstruct his popularity, by encou-

raging the notion that he must be interpolated, expanded, and purified to suit the modern taste, and that if he is to be read at all, it must be through the medium of an interpreter.

A still more ambitious effort to modernize Chaucer was made in 1740, when the whole of *The Canterbury Tales* were, to use the phraseology of the authors, 'turned into modern language,' and printed on opposite pages to the original. This was at least submitting the venture to an honest ordeal, by furnishing the reader with the means of judging for himself between the poet and his expositors. The decision of the reader may be inferred from the oblivion into which the labours of these gentlemen have fallen. Their failure, however, should not be exclusively ascribed to the hopelessness of the task; but rather to their deficiency in the requisites indispensable to the adequate discharge of the function they assumed. They do not appear to have thoroughly understood their author; they not only suffered a multitude of his characteristic touches to escape, but in a still greater number of instances substituted traits of their own; they embroidered his antiquity with modern tinsel; they sometimes even exchanged his costume for the last new fashion; and throwing into utter confusion the chronology of manners, they transposed the knights and city madams of the fourteenth century into the fine gentlemen and ostentatious ladies of their own time. It does not necessarily follow that all attempts to modernize Chaucer should be disfigured by similar deviations; or that it is impracticable to present a transcript of him that should be more faithful in its details; but the temptations to wander from the text are so irresistible, and the difficulties in the way of achieving a literal version are so insuperable, that we must not be surprised to find that writers whose qualifications justified the highest hopes of success should also have failed in the attempt. The last experiment of this kind was made a few years ago, when a small volume appeared containing a selection from Chaucer's poems, converted into modern English by Wordsworth, Leigh Hunt, and others. The contributors to this volume do not seem to

have proceeded upon any uniform or settled principle, but to have acted independently, each pursuing the plan suggested by his own judgment; the whole, however, being governed by a general intention to keep as close as possible to the text. If there was here too wide a discretion left open to individual taste, the variety it produced was not without a corresponding advantage. It served to show the different latitudes which competent scholars, and acknowledged masters of the art of versification, considered themselves justified in indulging, and to what extent they thought they might depart even from the language of the original in the laudable desire of making its substance more widely known. The result was satisfactory in this respect, that it may be said to have finally determined all doubts on the subject. Some of these versions are distinguished by as much fidelity as it is, perhaps, possible to attain in the transfusion of an ancient author into modern language; and are otherwise admirable specimens of skilful treatment. But they are, nevertheless, as unlike Chaucer as they are unlike each other. In proportion as they preserve strictly his exact phraseology, they become formal and cumbrous; for that which is perfectly easy and natural in its antique garb and associations, acquires an obsolete and heavy air when it is transplanted amongst more familiar forms. When they deviate, on the other hand, which the necessities of structure and metre frequently render unavoidable, it is always at a loss of some subtle trait of expression, or some complexional peculiarity essential to the truthful presentation of the original. Between the new and the old styles which, notwithstanding the utmost care, thus become insensibly mingled, the spirit of Chaucer escapes, and nothing remains, so to speak, but the letter of his work. We are further warned in the best of these versions of another danger inseparable from all such experiments. The special manner of the modern versifier may be traced visibly in each. It would be unreasonable to expect that a translator who is himself a poet should not sometimes relapse, either unconsciously or by design, into his own habits of thought and modes of expres-

sion; and, accordingly, the reader who should take up these poems ignorant of the source from whence they were derived, would have no difficulty in detecting the marks by which the hand of each translator may be identified and distinguished from the rest. We cannot have more conclusive examples of the inutility of attempting to exhibit Chaucer in a modern costume; and, whatever other means may be devised for the removal of difficulties, the hope of rendering him successfully into the language of our day must be abandoned.

Since the publication of these pieces no further efforts have been made in this way. In 1846, Leigh Hunt published some selections from the poems of Chaucer, with a running prose version to assist the reader.¹ The design was ingenious, and less obnoxious to a certain class of objections than the metrical form. It may be doubted, however, whether the most accurate execution of such a design would materially advance the reader in his knowledge of Chaucer. He would find old forms of expression accommodated to modern forms, and if he wished to comprehend his author, he would be compelled to weigh their separate value and contrast their force. He would find some phrases not represented at all; others partially resolved; and not a few inevitably paraphrased. The massive features of the original would be gradually frittered away by the process of examination and comparison in detail he would be compelled to pursue; while the facility afforded to him of summarizing the general meaning would produce an indifference to the study of those minute features in which so much of its peculiar interest consists. In a book of selections, especially with the fine sympathies and critical faculty of Leigh Hunt presiding over its pages, a prose version running at the foot of the text may do something towards the extension of a taste for Chaucer: but it would manifestly be out of place in an edition of Chaucer's works, where everything that could be done by such a version can be much more effectively done by explanatory notes.

¹ *Wit and Humour; selected from the English Poets.* 1846.

The conclusion to which we are led by this review of the means that have been hitherto taken to popularize Chaucer, is that, since he cannot be appreciated in the language of others, he must be read in his own.

But, trusting still to the language of Chaucer, it has frequently been urged that there remains an expedient by which it could be rendered more intelligible to the general reader, without derogating from its integrity. This expedient is to modernize the orthography—apparently a simple proceeding. In the preparation of the present edition this suggestion has been maturely considered, and deliberately rejected for the following reasons. In the first place, it was found that the reduplication of consonants, the employment of the final *e*, and other peculiarities which appear to be mere fancies of the scribe, or obsolete usages of the printer, are in fact grammatical inflections of great beauty and importance. In the second place, these peculiarities, besides being indispensable to grammatical accuracy, constitute the key to the metrical structure of the verse, and must be retained in innumerable instances for the preservation of the metre. To attempt a selection of those which it is indispensable to retain, and others which might be rejected without injury to the metre, would be attended with serious hazard; nor could such an experiment, with our present knowledge of mediæval English, be conducted upon any fixed or rational principles. It would throw open an inexhaustible source of discussion, and render the piebald text utterly valueless to the scholar, without bringing it a step nearer to the comprehension of the general reader, who would, probably, be more perplexed by its inconsistencies than by the comparatively uniform antiquity of the original. The labour of such an undertaking would involve the absolute necessity of investigating, and in a multitude of cases, of reconstructing the grammar and metre of every line separately; and in the end, presuming this labour to be satisfactorily accomplished, the text would not be Chaucer, but a version of Chaucer. The advocates of a modernized orthography have

not sufficiently weighed these objections, and have, probably, founded their opinion of its practicability upon the examples of modernization which have been effected amongst the poets of the Tudor and Stuart periods. But it should be remembered, that those poets do not come within the same category as a poet of the fourteenth century. In their time the old grammatical inflections had been superseded by the modern construction, and the peculiarities of their spelling in no way affected the metre, and did not require to be retained for any other reason.

A critic, whose judgment on such questions may be appealed to with confidence, was of opinion that Chaucer's language and metre could be made easy to the million without tampering with its forms. 'I cannot in the least allow,' he said, 'any necessity for Chaucer's poetry, especially *The Canterbury Tales*, being considered obsolete. Let a plain rule be given for sounding the final *e* of syllables, and for expressing the terminations of such words as *oceän*, *natiön*, &c., as dissyllables; or let the syllables to be sounded in such cases be marked by a competent metrist. This simple expedient would, with a very few trifling exceptions where the errors are inveterate, enable any reader to feel the perfect smoothness and harmony of Chaucer's verse.'¹ The first of these suggestions fully recognizes the propriety of giving Chaucer in his own language. The second proposes a means for facilitating the reader's enjoyment of his metre. This latter proposal, which exhausts all the schemes that have been thought of for popularizing our great poet, is open to some obvious objections.

It may be conceded at once that the accentuation of the text would be useful to the reader, if the terribly complicated appearance it would impart to the verse did not deter him altogether from its perusal—which such a mass of syllabic guides would be very likely to do. In order to carry out a thoroughly effective system of accents, it would be necessary

¹ COLERIDGE.—*Table Talk*.

to employ two or three distinctive signs; and the unavoidable frequency of their recurrence, and the obligation thus created of scanning the lines, would so sensibly interrupt the pleasure of the reader, that, it may be taken for granted, a book scarred over by such scholastic marks would never find its way into general circulation. But there are other objections of a more important kind. For the purpose of testing the experiment practically, the whole of *The Canterbury Tales* were accented in the first instance for this edition; and it was not till the labour had been completed that the design of printing them in that manner was relinquished. The necessity these accents imposed, in a vast number of instances, of deciding doubtful questions affecting the resolution of quantities, and the differences of opinion they would inevitably generate on points for which no arbitrary laws can possibly be laid down, determined their final rejection. It was thought better to supply the reader with a few plain rules for pronunciation, which should embrace the principal structural peculiarities, leaving him to apply them for himself.

The following specimens may be taken as a sample of the results which might be expected from the adoption of a modernized orthography, with accented syllables. It should be observed, that the signs here used are those employed to mark the prosodial value of syllables in Latin and Greek, and that they are introduced merely to express the *analogous* and not the *identical* value in English verse. Accents of a different kind would be necessary for an edition of Chaucer.

ORIGINAL.

Why schuld I nought as wel telle you alle
 The portraiture, that was upon the walle
 Within the temple of mighty Mars the reede ?
 Al peynted was the wal in length and breede
 Like to the estres of that grisly place,
 That hight the gret tempul of Mars in Thrace,
 In that colde and frosty regioun
 Ther as Mars hath his sovereyn mancioun.
 Ferst on the wal was peynted a foreste
 In which ther dwelled neyther man nor best,

With knotty, knarry bareyn trees olde
 Of stubbes scharpe and hidous to byholde;
 In which ther ran a swymbul in a swough,
 As it were a storine schuld berst¹ every bough:
 And downward on an hil under a bent,
 Ther stood the tempul of Mars armypotent.

ORTHOGRAPHY MODERNIZED.

Whȳ shōuld I nōt ās wēll tēllē yōu āll
 Thē pōrtrāitūre thāt wās ūpōn thē wāll,
 Wīthīn thē tēmplē ōf mīghtȳ Mārs thē rēede?²
 All pāintēd wās thē wāll īn lēngth ānd brēede?
 Līke tō thē ēstrēs ōf thāt grīslȳ plāce,
 Thāt hīght thē grēat tēmplē ōf Mārs īn Thīrāce,
 īn thāt cōldē ānd frōstȳ rēgion,
 Thēre ās Mārs hāth hīs sōv'rēign mānsion.
 First, ōn thē wāll wās pāintēd ā fōrēste,
 īn whīch thēre dwēllēd nēithēr mān nōr bēast,
 Wīth knōttȳ, knārrȳ, bārrēn trēes ōld,
 Wīth stūbbēs shārp ānd hīdeōus tō bēhōld;
 īn whīch thēre rān ā swīmblē īn ā swōugh
 As 'twēre ā stōrm shōuld būrstē ēvery bōugh;
 And dōwnwārd ōn ān hīll ūndēr ā bēnt,
 Thēre stōod thē tēmpl' ōf Mārs ārmīpōtēnt.

Whether the modernized version is preferable to the original must be left to the reader's judgment.

The Canterbury Tales have always occupied the first place in the order of Chaucer's poems; and that arrangement, which there is no sufficient reason for disturbing, has been followed in this edition. There can be little doubt, however, from allusions they contain to events that occurred in 1386, and to the *Confessio Amantis*, written in 1392-3,

¹ There should, perhaps, be a final *e* to *berst*; it was probably elided by the scribe, as remarked by Mr. Wright, in his introduction, before 'every.' [The correct reading is given by the Ellesmere MS. (and four others) 'As though a storm should bresten every bough.'—W. W. S.]

² This ought to have been changed into *red*, but then *breede* must have been changed into *bred*, which would not have expressed the meaning. This is another example of a difficulty which, by this time, the reader will perceive is insurmountable.

that in some of these tales we have the last productions of Chaucer's genius. Mr. Wright conjectures, from the unfinished state of the work, and the variations of the different MSS., that they were not composed continuously, but in detached portions, to be afterwards joined together. The original plan, as indicated by the Prologue, was evidently intended to include the proceedings of the pilgrims at Canterbury and their journey back to London, during which each of them was to relate a second story, the whole winding up with a supper and an Epilogue. Of this considerable design scarcely the first half was accomplished; and even that division was left incomplete, connecting links being wanted in several places. Chaucer appears to have carried out his purpose consecutively only so far as the opening of *The Cook's Tale*, up to which all the MSS. correspond in the order of the tales. From that point their divergence is not more remarkable than their final agreement, the tales of *The Maniple* and *The Parson* in all instances terminating the series.

NOTES.

[P. 49. The form *ich* is not German, but the Norman-French pronunciation of the A.-S. *ic*. The *ch* is French, not like the German guttural sound.

Swilk (i.e., so-like) is of course not a derivative from *whilk*, which stands for *who-like* (Goth. *hwa-leiks*).

That the term *you liketh* stands for 'it pleases you' is of course the correct interpretation. For full information on Chaucer's grammatical forms see the 'Selections from Chaucer' in the Clarendon Press Series, where the prosody and scansion are also fully discussed.—W. W. S.]

CHAUCER'S POEMS.

THE

CANTERBURY TALES.

P O E M S

OF

GEOFFREY CHAUCER.

The Canterbury Tales.

THE PROLOGUE.

WHAN that Aprille with his schowres swoote¹
The drought of Marche hath perced to the roote,

¹ A metrical analysis of the first few lines of the Prologue, in which examples of most of the peculiarities of inflexion and accentuation alluded to in the introduction occur, will, it is hoped, enable the reader to conquer any difficulties of this nature that may present themselves in the verse. The principles here indicated will be found applicable throughout the poem. This is Tyrwhitt's plan; but it will be seen that, as the text is different from his, so also is the metre. The marks of *long* and *short*, properly applied to the classical metres only, are here used as being plainer than an accent on the accented syllables:—

• Whǎn thāt | Aprīl | lē with | hīs schōw | rēs swōote
Thē drōught | ōf Mārchē | hāth pēr | cēd tō | thē rōote,
And bā | thūd ēve | rȳ vēyne | īn swīch | līcōur,
Ōf whīch | vērtūe | ēngēn | drēd īs | thē flōur;
Whǎn Zē | phȳrūs | ēek with | hīs swē | tē brēeth
Ēnspī | rūd hāth | īn ēve | rȳ hōlte | and hēeth
Thē tēn | drē crōp | pēs, and | thē yōn | gē sōnne
Hāth īn | thē Rām | hīs hāl | fē cōurs | ī-rōnne,
And smā | lē fōw | lēs mā | kēn mē | lōdie,
Thāt slē | pēn āl | thē nīght | wīth ō | pēn yhe,
Sō prik | ēth hēm | nātūre | īn hēre | cōrūges:—
Thānne lōn | gēn fōlk | tō gōn | ōn pīl | grīmāges, &c.'

Here the final e in *Aprille*, *swete*, *halfe*, *yonge*, *smale* is pronounced; but

And bathud every veyne in swich licour,
 Of which vertue¹ engendred is the flour;
 Whan Zephirus eek with his swete breeth
 Enspirud hath in every holte and heeth
 The tendre croppes, and the yonge sonne²
 Hath in the Ram³ his halfe cours i-ronne,
 And smale fowles maken melodie,
 That slepen al the night with open yhe,
 So priketh⁴ hem nature in here corages:—
 Thanne longen folk to gon on pilgrimages,

it is quiescent in *Marche*, *veyne*, *nature*, because in these cases it is followed by a word beginning with a vowel, or with the letter *h*. This is the rule of French poetry. The final *es* is pronounced in *croppes*, *fowles*, as in German. The French words *licour*, *nature*, *corages* are accented on the last syllable of the root, as in French. The reader will also remark the old forms of *hem* and *here*, for them and their; and *slepen*, *maken*, the Anglo-Saxon inflexion of the infinitive and plural verb: *i-ronne* is also the pret. part. of *rennen*, to run, as in German, *gelobt*, from *loben*.

¹ *Vertue* here signifies power. The meaning is, when April has bathed every vein of the earth in that moisture which, by its genial power, produces the blossom.

‘Where now the vital energy that moved,
 While summer was, the pure and subtle lymph
 Through the imperceptible meandering veins
 Of leaf and flower? It sleeps; and the icy touch
 Of unprolific winter has impressed
 A cold stagnation on the intestine tide.’

COWPER.—*Task. Winter Walk at Noon.*

² The sun is said to be young, as having only just entered upon his annual progress through the signs of the Zodiac.

³ For *Ram*, Tyrwhitt proposes to read *Bull*, because in April the sun has entered the sign of Taurus. The study of astronomy was introduced into Europe in the middle ages by the Arabs. [The reading *Ram* is right. The sun, during April, ran a half-course in the Ram, and a half-course in the Bull, because it entered Taurus about the *middle* of the month. Chaucer means that it was past the middle of the month. It was, in fact, April the 16th. By the time the Man of Lawe told his tale it was April the 18th, as Chaucer tells us. See Scheme, vol. ii. pp. 351–354.—W. W. S.]

⁴ So nature spurs or excites them in their passions. Courage means generally impulse, desire, as ‘devout courage,’ further on, impulse of devotion.

And palmers¹ for to seeken straunge strondes,
 To ferne² halwes, kouthe in sondry londes;
 And specially, from every schires ende
 Of Engelond, to Canturbury they wende,
 The holy blisful martir³ for to seeke,
 That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.*

¹ Speght makes the distinction between palmers and pilgrims to consist in the former never ceasing to go from shrine to shrine, while the latter are under a vow only to perform one specified pilgrimage. In this fanciful interpretation he is followed by Sir Walter Scott. It is obvious that *palmer* means one who has made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and brought home a palm-branch as a token, just as the pilgrims to Saint James of Compostella used to bring home a cockleshell. Thus Chaucer makes the palmers long to seek *strange*, *i. e.*, foreign strands.

² Speght and Tyrwhitt for *ferne*, read *serve*. The reading in the text has been restored by Mr. Wright from the Harl. MS., and means *distant*, from *fer* far. Halwes, meaning saints, is still retained in the Scottish Hallowe'en, the Eve of All Hallows, or All Saints. In the Lord's Prayer, 'Hallowed be thy name!' is the translation of *sanctificetur nomen tuum*. *Kouthe*, known, from *kennen*, to know, survives in our uncouth, unknown, strange.

³ Thomas à Becket, the Chancellor of Henry II. The King raised him to the see of Canterbury in the hope that he would become a willing instrument in establishing the Norman dynasty and oppressing the Saxons; but finding, on the contrary, that he strenuously defended the rights of the church and of the conquered and oppressed people, he employed three of his retainers to murder him while he was saying mass in his cathedral. Becket was soon afterwards canonized, and his remains, which were preserved at Canterbury, became an object of pilgrimage. *Ld. Macaulay* says, 'It was a national as well as a religious feeling that drew great multitudes to the shrine of Becket, the first Englishman who, since the Conquest, had been terrible to the foreign tyrants.'—*Hist. Eng.*, vol. i.

⁴ Who had helped them by his prayers, and been thus instrumental to their recovery. In the middle ages it was usual, in sickness or peril, to vow a pilgrimage to the shrine of a saint, and if the person was restored to health or escaped the danger, the happy issue was ascribed to the prayers of the saint, whose shrine was heaped with rich offerings in acknowledgment. *Erasmus*, in his *Peregrinatio religionis ergo*, alludes to numbers of arms and legs hung up in the shrine of Saint Thomas in gratitude for the cures effected in these particular limbs by his prayers. Similar memorials may still be seen in churches on the continent. Saint Louis vowed his first crusade or pilgrimage to Jerusalem when he was so ill as to be thought past recovery; and on his return, when he and the Queen were in danger

Byfel that, in that sesoun on a day,
 In Southwerk at the Tabbard¹ as I lay,
 Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
 To Canturbury with ful devout corage,
 At night was come into that hostelrie
 Wel nyne and twenty in a companye,
 Of sondry folk, by aventure i-falle
 In felawschipe, and pilgryms were thei alle,
 That toward Canturbury wolden ryde.
 The chambres and the stables weren wyde,
 And wel we weren esud² atte beste.
 And shortly, whan the sonne was³ to reste,
 So hadde I spoken with hem everychon,
 That I was of here felawschipe anon,
 And made forward⁴ erly to aryse,
 To take oure weye ther as I yow devyse.⁵
 But natheles, whiles I have tyme and space,
 Or that I ferthere in this tale pace,
 Me thinketh it acordant to resoun,
 To telle yow alle the condicioun

of shipwreck, Lord de Joinville tells us that she came into his cabin in great distress, and that he said to her, 'Madame, vow to make a pilgrimage to my Lord Saint Nicholas, at Varengeville, and I promise you that God will restore us in safety to France.'—*Memoirs of Saint Louis*. Part II.

¹ A sleeveless coat worn in times past by noblemen in the wars, but now only by heralds, and is called their 'coat of arms in service.' It is the sign of an inn in Southwark by London, within the which was the lodging of the Abbot of Hyde by Winchester.—S.

The Tabard is now the Talbot Inn in the High-street, Borough. The sign was changed in 1676. An inscription was afterwards set up to indicate the house: 'This is the inne where Sir Jeffry Chaucer and the nine and twenty pilgrims lay in their journey to Canterbury, anno 1383.' No part of the existing inn is of the age of Chaucer. In Speght's time it was 'newly repaired, with convenient rooms much increased, for the receipt of many guests.' [The Tabard inn is no longer in existence, but was only lately pulled down.—W. W. S.]

² Accommodated in the best manner. 'Easement' is still used in law-conveyances with the meaning of accommodation.

³ To rest, *i.e.*, at rest, in a state of rest; a pure Anglo-Saxon form.

⁴ Made agreement beforehand.

⁵ To that place that I tell you of, *scil.*, Canterbury.

Of eche of hem, so as it semed me,
 And which they weren, and of what degre;
 And eek in what array that they were inne:
 And at a knight than wol I first bygynne.

A KNIGHT¹ ther was, and that a worthy man,
 That from the tyme that he first bigan
 To ryden out, he lovede chyvalrye,
 Trouthe and honour, fredom and curtesie.
 Ful worthi was he in his lordes werre,
 And thereto hadde he riden, noman ferre,²
 As wel in Cristendom as in hethenesse,
 And evere honoured for his worthinesse.
 At Alisandre³ he was whan it was wonne,
 Ful ofte tyme he hadde the bord bygonne⁴

¹ In the middle ages, before the system of standing armies was introduced, the military force of the kingdom consisted of the barons, who, according to the feudal tenure, were obliged to supply, for their sovereign's wars, a certain number of knights, who were again obliged to bring into the field a contingent of inferior men-at-arms and yeomen, in proportion to the amount of their landed property. After the campaign was over, this militia returned to their former occupation; and a soldier by profession was obliged to seek employment and a livelihood, by serving under different captains in all parts of the world. The knight is here said to have ridden 'in his lorde's werre,' that is, to have served under his feudal superior, abroad and at home. It might at first seem as if *his lorde's werre* meant the crusade; but he is said to have served, not only in heathenesse, but in Christendom. Tyrwhitt supposes that the achievements of Chaucer's knight were suggested by those of a contemporary, 'le noble et vaillant Chevalier, Mathew de Gourney,' whose epitaph is given in Leland's *Itin.* v. iii. p. 91, 'qui en sa vie fu en la bataille de Benamaryn, et alla apres à la siège d'Algezir sur les Sarazines, et aussi à la bataille de l'Escluse, de Cressy, de Deyngenesse, de Peyteres, de Nazare, d'Ozrey, et à plusieurs autres batailles et arseges, en les quex il gagna noblement grant los et honour.'

² *Ferre* is the comparative of *fer*, far—superlative, *ferrest*.

³ Alexandria, in Egypt, was won, and immediately afterwards abandoned, in 1365, by Pierre de Lusignan, King of Cyprus.—T.

⁴ This knight, being often among the knights of the Dutch order, called Ordo Teutonicus, in Prussia, was, for his worthiness, placed by them at the table before any of what nation soever.—S. In other senses, bord or bourd means play, often used for fight or battle. Thus 2 Sam., ii. 14, Abner says, 'Let the young men arise and *play* before us,' meaning fight; at Hampton-court, the 'toy' means the tilting-ground, and sword-play is a common expression. The meaning of the passage no doubt is, that this knight occupied the highest place at the table, and when

Aboven alle naciouns in Pruce.
 In Lettowe¹ hadde reyced and in Ruce,
 No cristen man so ofte of his degre.
 In Gernade atte siege hadde he be
 Of Algesir,² and riden in Belmarie.³
 At Lieys was he, and at Satalie,⁴
 Whan they were wonne; and in the Greete⁵ see
 At many a noble arive⁶ hadde he be.
 At mortal batailles hadde he ben fitene,
 And foughten for our feith at Tramassene
 In lystes thries, and ay slayn his foo.
 This ilke worthi knight hadde ben also
 Somtyme with the lord of Palatye,⁷
 Ageyn another hethene in Turkye:

the cup went round, which was done ceremoniously, he was served first, and, therefore, *began* before all other nations, that is, natives of the several states of Germany, who composed the Teutonic order, or who were fighting against the infidels in Prussia. The Teutonic order, like the Templars and Knights of St. John, was originally founded to fight against the Saracens in Palestine; but 'finding,' as Fuller remarks, 'that by the course of the cards they must rise losers if they continued the war in the holy land, Hermannus de Saltza, then fourth Grand Master, came, in 1239, into Prussia, converted the half-heathen people of that country, and defended that frontier of Christendom against the heathen Tartars. Albert of Brandenburg was the last Grand Master. He broke the vow of his order, losing his virginity to keep his chastity, and married Dorothea, daughter of the Duke of Denmark.'—FULLER'S *Holy War*, book v. c. 14. In him originated the royal house of Brandenburg, of which the present King of Prussia is the head.

¹ Lithuania and Russia were not thoroughly converted to Christianity till the 13th century, and were continually at war with the frontier countries of Christendom.

² The city of Algezir was taken from the Moorish King of Granada in 1344.

³ Belmarie and Tremessen were Moorish kingdoms in Africa.

⁴ Pierre de Lusignan, soon after his accession to the throne of Cyprus in 1352, took Satalie, the ancient Attalia; and in another expedition about 1367, he made himself master of the town of Lajas, in Armenia.—T.

⁵ Probably the part of the Mediterranean which washes the shores of Palestine, in opposition to the small inland Sea or Lake of Gennesaret and the Dead Sea.

⁶ Speght and Tyrwhitt read *armie*. *Arive* must here mean arrival, or disembarkation of troops.

⁷ Palathia in Anatolia.

And everemore he hadde a sovereyn prys.
 And though that he was worthy he was wys,¹
 And of his port as meke as is a mayde.
 He never yit no vilonye² ne sayde
 In al his lyf, unto no maner wight.
 He was a verray perfight gentil knight.
 But for to telle you of his aray,
 His hors was good, but he ne was nought gay.
 Of fustyan he wered a gepoun
 Al bysmoterud with his haburgeoun.³
 For he was late comen from his viage,
 And wente for to doon his pilgrimage.⁴
 With him ther was his sone, a yong SQUYER,
 A lovyer, and a lusty bachelor,
 With lokkes crulle as they were layde in presse.
 Of twenty yeer he was of age I gesse.
 Of his stature he was of evene lengthe,
 And wondurly delyver, and gret of strengthe.

¹ Though he was so worthy or brave in the field, he was not the less sage in council.

² A remarkable illustration of the knight's carefulness to avoid all unbecoming words is to be found in Joinville's *Memoirs of Louis IX., King of France, commonly called St. Louis*, the model of the knightly character, a work which should be consulted by every person who desires to understand the spirit of chivalry. 'I have been constantly with him,' says the seneschal, 'for twenty-two years, but never in my life, for all the passions I have seen him in, did I hear him swcar, or blaspheme God, his holy mother, or any of the saints. When he wished to affirm anything, he said, 'Truly it is so.' . . . I never heard him mention the word 'devil,' if it was not in some book that made it necessary; and it is very disgraceful to the princes and kingdom of France to suffer it, and hear the name; for you will see that in any dispute one will not say three words to another in abuse, but he will add, 'Go to the devil,' or other bad words. Now it is very shocking thus to send man or woman to the devil, when they are by baptism become the children of God. In my castle of Joinville, whoever makes use of this word is instantly buffeted, and the frequency of bad language is abolished there.'

³ The habergeon or hauberk was the peculiar armour of knights, hence called loricati.

⁴ He had but just accomplished his voyage home, and immediately hastened to perform the pilgrimage he had vowed for a safe return, without waiting to change the clothes he had worn all through the campaign.

And he hadde ben somtyme in chivachie,¹
 In Flaundres, in Artoys, and in Picardie,
 And born him wel, as in so litel space,
 In hope to stonden in his lady grace.
 Embrowdid² was he, as it were a mede
 Al ful of fresshe floures, white and reede.
 Syngynge he was, or flowtynge, al the day ;
 He was as fressh as is the moneth of May.
 Schort was his goune, with sleeves long and wyde.
 Wel cowde he sitte on hors, and faire ryde.
 He cowde songes wel make and endite,
 Justne and eek daunce, and wel purtray and write.
 So hote he lovede, that by nightertale
 He sleep nomore than doth a nightyngale.
 Curteys he was, lowly, and servysable,
 And carf byforn his fadur at the table.³

A YEMAN⁴ had he, and servantes nomoo
 At that tyme, for him lust ryde soo ;
 And he was clad in coote and hood of grene.
 A shef of pocok arwes⁵ bright and kene

¹ The squire had been permitted to ride in attendance upon a knight, in short military expeditions, preparatory to being himself admitted to the order of knighthood.

² Literally *embroidered*, from the French, *broder* ; Speght understands it to mean freckled ; but it seems rather to signify a complexion of mingled white and red.

³ The descriptions of the knight and squire are interesting examples of the *beau idéal* of the chivalrous character ; its purity of morals and reverence for women ; its love of manly exercises, and, at the same time, of liberal accomplishments, and its cultivation of that spirit of self-respect combined with humility, which feels no degradation in giving honour to whom honour is due.

⁴ Tyrwhitt notices the mistake of the printed copies in calling this character ' the squire's yeoman ;' whereas the pronoun *he* must refer to the knight. Yeoman is cognate with the Friesic *gaman*, a villager, the syllable *ga* being equivalent to A.-S. *gá*, modern German *gau*, a tract of land. The title was given to persons in a middling rank of life not in service. So the miller, in the *Reeve's Tale*, is careful ' to saven his estaat and yomanrye.' The knight probably rode on his pilgrimage with only one attendant, from humility. In *Gamelyn*, the word *yeongeman* is used for yeoman.

⁵ Arrows were usually feathered from the wing of the swan, as in the ballad of *Chevy Chase*—

Under his belte he bar full thriftily.
 Wel cowde he dresse his takel yomanly;
 His arwes drowpud nought with fetheres lowe.
 And in his hond he bar a mighty bowe.
 A not-heed¹ hadde he with a broun visage.
 Of woode-craft cowde he wel al the usage.
 Upon his arme he bar a gay bracer,
 And by his side a swerd and a bokeler,
 And on that other side a gay daggere,
 Harneysed wel, and scharp as poynt of spere;
 A Cristofre² on his brest of silver schene.
 An horn he bar, the bawdrik was of grene;
 A forster was he sothely, as I gesse.

Ther was also a Nonne, a PRIORESSE,
 That of hire smylyng was ful symple and coy;
 Hire grettest ooth nas but by seynt Loy;³
 And sche was clept madame Englentyne.
 Ful wel sche sang the servise devyne,

‘The dynt yt was bath sad and soar,
 That he of Mongonberry sete;
 The swane-fethars, that his arrowe bar,
 With his hart blood the wear wete.’

Peacock's feathers were sometimes used on occasions of show for their greater beauty. Thus in the *Lytell Geste of Robyn Hode*, published in Ritson's collection, Sir Richard at the Lee sends the outlaw a present of a hundred sheaves of arrows:—

‘And every arrow an elle longe,
 With pecocke well ydight.’—*Fytte* ii. 202.

It was a sign of the yeoman's carefulness in his business that they stuck out from the shaft instead of drooping.

¹ Tyrwhitt and Mr. Wright understand by this expression ‘a head like a nut;’ but there is a Saxon verb ‘to notte,’ meaning to poll or clip, as is noticed by Dr. Maitland in his *Essays on the Reformation*. The expression ‘nut-headed knave’ occurs in Shakespeare's *Henry VIII*. The hair was worn long in the time of Edward III., see Chaucer's *Wordes to Adam, his owne scrivener*; but such a fashion would be inconvenient to one engaged in wood-craft.

² This saint is represented as an old man of great stature, carrying Christ, in the form of a little child, upon his back over a river. His legend, in the *Legenda Aurea*, if taken as an allegory, is not without merit, and accounts for the reverence shown him by the lower orders.

³ Tyrwhitt and Mr. Wright suppose this to be a contraction of Eloy, or Eligius; but in the French translation of the *Legenda Aurea*,

Entuned in hire nose¹ ful semly;
 And Frensch sche spak ful faire and fetysly,
 Aftur the scole of Stratford atte Bowe,²
 For Frensch of Parys was to hire unknowe.
 At mete wel i-taught was sche withalle;
 Sche leet no morsel from hire lippes falle,
 Ne wette hire fynGRES in hire sauce deepe.
 Wel cowde sche carie a morsel, and wel keepe,
 That no drope fil uppon hire brest.
 In curtesie was sett al hire lest.
 Hire overlippe wypud sche so clene,
 That in hire cuppe was no ferthing sene
 Of grees, whan sche dronken hadde hire draught.
 Ful semely aftur hire mete sche raught.
 And sikurly sche was of gret disport,
 And ful plesant, and amyable of port,
 And peyned hire to counterfete cheere
 Of court, and ben estatlich of manere,
 And to ben holden digne of reverence.
 But for to speken of hire conscience,
 Sche was so charitable and so pitous,
 Sche wolde weepe if that sche sawe a mous

by Jehan de Vignay, published in 1543, the name of St. Louis is thus spelt. In the *Book of Homilies*, published in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the name again occurs in the same form. 'God and St. Loy save thee.' It is quite in character, for the prioress, so proud of her obsolete French, and who 'peyned hire to counterfete cheere of court,' to swear by 'St. Loy roi de France.'

¹ Speght reads *voice*, which gives a better sense; for to sing the service divine through the nose would be anything but seemly.

² It is highly characteristic of the innocent affectation of court manners and real ignorance of the ways of the world which pervade the whole of the simple Prioress's character, that she should speak the French of the 'scole of Stratford atte Bowe,' meaning such French as was used by the common people at Stratford. 'Scole' here has the same force as in its more strict application to a particular style in art—the Venetian school for example. The expression occurs again in the *Miller's Tale*, where Absolon is said to dance after the scole of Oxenford, *i. e.*, the style that was fashionable at Oxford. Equally characteristic is the Prioress's precision in practising such rules of good manners as could be learned from the books of those times. Tyrwhitt quotes a passage from the *Roman de la Rose*, which lays down rules for proper behaviour at table almost in the same words.

Caught in a trappe, if it were deed or bledde.
 Of smale houndes hadde sche, that sche fedde
 With rostud fleissch and mylk and wastel breed.
 But sore wepte sche if oon of hem were deed,
 Or if men smot¹ it with a yerde smerte:
 And al was conscience and tendre herte.
 Ful semely hire wymple i-pynched was;
 Hire nose streight; hire eyen grey as glas;
 Hire mouth ful smal, and therto softe and reed;
 But sikurly sche hadde a fair forheed.
 It was almost a spanne brood, I trowe;
 For hardily sche was not undurgrowe.
 Ful fetys was hire cloke, as I was waar.
 Of smal coral aboute hire arme sche baar
 A peire of bedes gaudid al with grene;²
 And theron heng a broch³ of gold ful schene,

¹ Mr. Wright observes that 'the word *men* appears here construed with a singular verb, as though it had been *man* (on frappa).' The verb, to agree with *men*, ought regularly to be *smote*. But to this place may, perhaps, apply the rule given in his valuable introduction, where he says, 'It was a constant rule to elide the final *e* in pronunciation, when it preceded a word beginning with a vowel or with the letter *h*.' And he adds, 'This was the source of frequent errors to the scribes, who omitted sometimes to write the letter which they did not pronounce.' [Mr. Wright's note is correct; for when *men* is used in the sense of *G. man*, or *F. on*, it takes a sing. verb. The right reading is *smot* or *smoot*.—W. W. S.]

² *Bede* meant originally a prayer, as in *bedesman*; but from the custom of counting prayers upon a string of grains, it came at last to be applied to the grains themselves. The collection of prayers thus counted, and called *rosaries*, are divided according to their subjects, and the divisions are marked by beads of a different shape or colour; these were called *gawdays*, meaning trifling ornaments, and in this case were enamelled with green. Fleury states that this kind of devotion was first introduced to enable the unlearned lay-brothers, or servants in the monasteries, to count the paternosters which they were bound to recite at the canonical hours, instead of repeating the Psalms and lessons from Scripture in Latin like the learned monks.

³ Properly a pin, from *broche*, a *spit*, but applied generally to any jewel. The crowned A appears, in accordance with the motto, to denote the sovereign virtue of charity, or Amor. Warton says that this motto and device are inconsistent with the prioress's profession: but love or charity is represented in Scripture as the greatest of Christian graces.

On which was first i-writen a crowned A,
 And after that, *Amor vincit omnia*.
 Anothur NONNE also with hire hadde sche,
 That was hire chapelleyne,¹ and PRESTES thre.
 A MONK ther was, a fair for the maistrie,²
 An out-rydere, that loved venerye;³
 A manly man, to ben an abbot able.
 Full many a deynte hors hadde he in stable:
 And whan he rood, men might his bridel⁴ heere
 Gyngle in a whistlyng wynd so cleere,
 And eek as lowde as doth the chapel belle.
 Ther as this lord was keper of the selle,⁵

¹ Tyrwhitt professes not to be able to conjecture the duties of a female chaplain; they may be inferred, however, from the desire that existed to assimilate the offices in religious houses of women to those in the monasteries of men, and the duties of a chaplain to the prioress may have consisted in attending generally upon her in chapel.

² A French phrase, applying to one who bid fair to excel all others. Tyrwhitt quotes some passages from old books on medicine, where a remedy is said to be '*bone pur la maistrie*,' that is, a *sovereign* remedy.

³ Hunting.—The canon law strictly forbids clergymen to hunt, but it was often infringed in the middle ages; one of the offences most severely lashed by Wickliffe.

⁴ The custom of hanging small bells on the bridles and harness of horses is still observed on the continent for the purpose of giving notice to foot passengers to get out of the way; but it was, no doubt, often used for ostentation. So Wickliffe inveighs against the clergy in his *Triologe* for their 'fair hors, and jolly and gay sadeles, and bridles *ringing* by the way.'—LEWIS'S *Wickliffe*, p. 121.

Lydgate, who was a monk of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Edmund's Bury, as a set-off against this description of a luxurious monk, in his imitation of the *Canterbury Tales* thus describes himself:—

On a palfray, slender, long and lene,
 With rusty bridle made not for the sale,
 My man toforne with a void male.

The host then addresses him:—

dan Pers,
 Dan Dominike, dan Godfray, or Clement,
 Ye be welcome newly into Kent,
 Thogh your bridel have nother boos ne bell.

* * * *

Upon your head a wonder thredbare hood.

⁵ In the cell, or religious house, where this lord or monk was superior, a milder discipline was observed. As for the rules of St. Maur and St. Benet, he let them pass by (*Jorby*, still used in Scotland)

The reule of seynt Maure or of seint Beneyt,¹
 Bycause that it was old and somdel streyt,
 This ilke monk leet forby hem pace,
 And helde aftur the newe world the space.
 He gaf nat of that text a pulled hen,
 That seith, that hunters been noon holy men;
 Ne that a monk, whan he is cloysterles,
 Is likned to a fische that is watirles;³
 This is to seyn, a monk out of his cloystre.
 But thilke text hild he not worth an oystre.
 And I seide his opinioun was good.
 What schulde he studie, and make himselven wood,
 Uppon a book in cloystre alway to powre,
 Or swynke with his handes, and laboure,⁴
 As Austyn byt? How schal the world be served?
 Lat Austyn have his swynk to him reserved.

because they were old and striet, and resolved to hold his course after the fashions of the new world. For *forby hem*, which occurs three lines after, Mr. Wright substitutes *olde thinges*, from Tyrwhitt.

¹ The rule of St. Benediet, contraeted Benet, was written about A.D. 530, and was the original, by which almost all the monastie orders in the west regulated their observances.

² The meaning of the word *space* is not obvious. Tyrwhitt reads *trace*, and Speght *pace*, both implying footsteps. This monk followed in the footsteps of the new world.

³ Tyrwhitt cites the text attributed by Gratian to a Pope Eugenius, *Sicut piscis sine aqua caret vita, ita sine monasterio monachus*. Thus Joinville says, 'the Scriptures do say that a monk cannot live out of his eloister without falling into deadly sins, any more than a fish can live out of water without dying. The reason is plain; for the religious who follow the king's court, eat and drink many meats and wines which they would not do were they resident in their eloisters; and this luxurious living induces them more to sin than if they lived the austere life of a convent.'

⁴ Peter the Venerable thus answers St. Bernard's complaints of the disuse of manual labour by the Benedictine monks. 'The rule [of St. Benediet] ordains it [manual labour] only to avoid idleness, which we avoid by spending our time in holy exereises, prayer, reading, psalmody.' 'As if,' adds Fleury, 'St. Benediet had not given enough time to these holy exereises, and had not had good reasons for requiring, *besides*, seven whole hours of labour.' St. Augustin followed St. Eusebius of Vereelli, in making his eathedral elergy live according to a rule similar to that of the monks, so far as their duties would permit.

Therefore he was a pricasour aright;
 Greyhoundes he hadde as swifte as fowel in flight;
 Of prikyng and of huntynge for the hare
 Was al his lust, for no cost wolde he spare.
 I saugh his sleeves purfiled atte hond
 With grys,¹ and that the fynest of a lond.
 And for to festne his hood undur his chyn
 He hadde of gold y-wrought a curious pyn:
 A love-knotte² in the gretter ende ther was.
 His heed was ballid, and schon as eny glas,
 And eek his face as he hadde be anynt.
 He was a lord ful fat and in good poynt;³
 His eyen steep, and rollyng in his heed,
 That stemed as a forneys of a leed;
 His bootes souple,⁴ his hors in gret estat.
 Now certainly he was a fair prelat;
 He was not pale as a for-pyned goost.
 A fat swan loved he best of eny roost.
 His palfray was as broun as eny berye.
 A FRERE ther was, a wantoun and a merye,
 A lymytour,⁵ a ful solempne man.
 In alle the ordres foure⁶ is noon that can

¹ Probably the fur of the grey squirrel, in French *petit gris*. In St. Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin there is a brass of a canon, with tippet trimmed with fur. A remnant of this custom is seen in the fur hoods of bachelors in our Universities.

² See *ante*, p. 83, note 3.

³ A literal translation of the French *embonpoint*.

⁴ This is part of the description of a smart abbot by an anonymous writer of the thirteenth century, '*Ocreas habebat in cruribus, quasi innatæ essent, sine plicâ porrectas.*'—Bod. MS., James, N. 6, p. 121.—T.

⁵ A lymytour was a friar, to whom had been assigned a certain district or limit, within which he was permitted to solicit alms.

⁶ The four orders of mendicant friars were—1. The Dominicans, or friars preachers, who took up their abode in Oxford in 1221, known from the colour of their dress as the Black friars. 2. The Franciscans, founded by St. Francis of Assisi, in 1207, and known by the name of Grey friars. These first established houses in England in 1224. 3. The Carmelites, or White friars, so called from their having first appeared on Mount Carmel. 4. The Augustin friars. On their first establishment, the poverty, the learning, and the industry in preaching of the

So moche of daliaunce and fair langage.
 He hadde i-made many a fair mariage
 Of yonge wymmen, at his owne cost.
 Unto his ordre he was a noble post.¹
 Ful wel biloved and famulier was he
 With frankeleyns over al in his cuntre,
 And eek with worthli wommen of the toun :
 For he hadde power of confessioun,
 As seyde himself, more than a curat,
 For of his ordre he was licenciāt.²
 Ful sweetly herde he confessioun,
 And plesaunt was his absolucioun ;
 He was an esy man to geve penance
 Ther as he wiste to han a good pitance ;
 For unto a povre ordre for to geve
 Is signe that a man is wel i-schreve.

friars, presented a favourable contrast to the luxury of the monks, and they were, therefore, at first popular ; but the wealth which had flowed in upon them in the days of their zeal, had, in the time of Chaucer, begun to do its work. The following description of a friar of the thirteenth century may be taken as the other side of Chaucer's picture. ' While we were at Hieres, we heard of a very good man, a Cordelier friar, who went about the country preaching ; his name was Father Hugh. The king being desirous of hearing and seeing him, we went out to meet him, and saw a great company of men and women following him on foot. On his arrival in the town, the king directed him to preach, and his first sermon was against the clergy, whom he blamed for being in such numbers with the king, saying they were not in a situation to save their souls, or that the Scriptures lied. He afterwards addressed the king, and pointed out to him that if he wished to live beloved and in peace with his people, he must be just and upright. He said he had carefully perused the Bible and other holy books, and had always found that among princes, whether infidel or Christian, no kingdoms had ever been excited to war against their lords, but through want of proper justice being done to the subject.'—*Memoirs of St. Louis*.

¹ *Post* means pillar or support ; an expression probably taken from Gal. ii. 9, where St. Paul calls Peter, and James, and John ' pillars ' of the church.

² In the penitential system of the mediæval church, there were some cases for which a parish priest could not give absolution, and which were reserved for the bishop's decision. The Popes, however, have been in the habit of granting to some orders the privilege of deciding all cases and absolving from all sins without any reference to the bishops. This was of course a fruitful source of jealousy.

For if he gaf, he dorste make avaunt,
 He wiste that a man was repentaunt.
 For many a man so hard is of his herte,
 He may not wepe though him sore smerte.
 Therfore in stede of wepyng and prayeres,
 Men mooten given silver to the pore freres.
 His typet¹ was ay farsud ful of knyfes
 And pynnes, for to give faire wyfes.
 And certayn he hadde a mery noote.
 Wel couthe he synge and pleye on a rote.
 Of yeddynges² he bar utturly the prys.
 His nekke whit was as the flour-de-lys.
 Therto he strong was as a champioun.
 He knew wel the tavernes in every toun,
 And every ostiller or gay tapstere,
 Bet than a lazer, or a beggere,
 For unto such a worthi man as he
 Acorded not, as by his faculté,
 To have with sike lazars aqueyntaunce.
 It is not honest,³ it may not avaunce,
 For to delen with such poraile,
 But al with riche and sellers of vitaille.
 And over al, ther eny profyt schulde arise,
 Curteys he was, and lowe of servyse.
 Ther was no man nowher so vertuous.
 He was the beste begger in al his hous,
 For though a widewe hadde but oo schoo,
 So plesaunt was his *In principio*,⁴

¹ *Typet*, hood, cuculla, or cowl. These were very large, and admitted of being used as a pocket.

² Speght gives the choice of three meanings for this word. 1. brawling; 2. gadding up and down; 3. loud singing. The last is probably the true meaning, from the Saxon *giddian*, or *geddian*, to sing.—See TYRWHITT *in loco*.

³ *Honest* is used here in the sense of the French *honnête*, becoming.

⁴ The rubric at the end of the mass directs the priest to read the beginning of the Gospel of St. John. *In principio erat verbum*—Vñe *Missale Romanum*.

Yet wolde he have a ferthing or he wente.
 His purchace was bettur than his rente.¹
 And rage he couthe and pleye as a whelp,
 In love-days² ther couthe he mochil helpe.
 For ther was he not like a cloysterer,
 With a thredbare cope³ as a pore scoler,
 But he was like a maister or a pope.
 Of double worstede was his semy-cope,
 That rounded was as a belle out of presse.
 Somwhat he lippede, for wantounesse,
 To make his Englissch swete upon his tunge;
 And in his harpyng, whan that he hadde sunge,
 His eyghen twynkeled in his heed aright,
 As don the sterres in the frosty night.
 This worthi lymytour was called Huberd.

A MARCHAUNT was ther with a forked berd,⁴
 In motteleye, and high on horse he sat,
 Uppon his heed a Flaundrisch bever hat;
 His botus clapsud faire and fetously.
 His resons he spak ful solempnely,
 Sownynge alway the encres of his wynnyng.
 He wolde the see were kepud for eny thinge

¹ A proverbial expression, meaning, apparently, that he was so shrewd in trading, that his profits by buying and selling were greater than his rent.

² Arbitrements.—S. A day appointed for the amicable settlement of differences. Bracton, lib. v. fol. 369.—T. Both in the arbitration, and in the feast which followed, according to the English custom in all such business, the friar did good service. At these meetings for the purpose of reconciling neighbours, the clergy might be very properly present; but the satirists of those days seem to have generally laid it to their charge as a crime. Thus, in the *Vision of Pierce Plowman*:—

‘And now is religion a ridere, a romer bi streetis,
 A ledar of love-daiyes,’ &c.

³ A cope is a long cloak, forming a perfect semicircle when laid flat, formerly used in processions, and still worn by the bishops at coronations. The semi-cope was a short cloak or cape.

⁴ A fashion common in the middle ages, as may be seen in brasses, and in many of the portraits in Lodge.

Betwixe Middulburgh and Orewelle.¹
 Wel couthe he in eschange scheeldes selle.²
 This worthi man ful wel his witte bisette;
 Ther wiste no man that he was in dette,
 So estately was he of governaunce,
 With his bargayns, and with his chevysaunce
 For sothe he was a worthi man withalle,
 But soth to say, I not what men him calle.

A CLERK³ ther was of Oxenford also,
 That unto logik hadde longe i-go.
 Al so lene was his hors as is a rake,
 And he was not right fat, I undertake;
 But lokede holwe, and therto soburly.
 Ful thredbare was his overest courtepy,
 For he hadde nought geten him yit a benefice,
 Ne was not worthy to haven an office.
 For him was lever have at his beddes heed
 Twenty bookes, clothed in blak and reed,
 Of Aristotil, and of his philosophie,
 Then robus riche, or fithul, or sawtrie.
 But al though he were a philosophre,
 Yet hadde he but litul gold in cofre;
 But al that he might of his frendes hente,
 On bookes and his lernyng he it spente,
 And busily gan for the sôules pray
 Of hem that gaf him wherwith to scolay.⁴
 Of studie tooke he most cure and heede.
 Not oo word spak he more than was neede;
 Al that he spak it was of heye prudence,
 And schort and quyk, and ful of gret sentence.

¹ i. e., guarded, that he might not lose his ships by pirates or privateers.

² He perfectly understood the system of stock-jobbing, so as to gain by the exchange of his crowns, écus, or *shields*, in the different money-markets of Europe.

³ A clerk means probably here, a scholar preparing for the priesthood.

⁴ In many Roman Catholic countries, till very lately, it was customary for poor scholars preparing for orders to ask and receive contributions from the people for the expenses of their education.

Sownynge in moral manere was his speche.
And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche.

A SERGEANT OF LAWE, war and wys,
That often hadde ben atte parvys,¹
Ther was also, ful riche of excellence.
Discret he was, and of gret reverence:
He semed such, his wordes were so wise,
Justice he was ful often in assise,
By patent, and by pleyn commissioun;
For his science, and for his heih renoun,
Of fees and robes had he many oon.
So gret a purchasour was ther nowher noon.
Al was fee symple to him in effecte,
His purchasyng might nought ben to him suspecte.
Nowher so besy a man as he ther nas,
And yit he semed besier than he was.
In termes hadde caas and domes alle,
That fro the tyme of kyng Will were falle.²
Therto he couthe endite, and make a thing,
Ther couthe no man pynche³ at his writyng.

¹ A barre; and here it is understood of the conference among the young counsellors, pleaders, attorneys, and students of the law, wherein the form of pleading and arguing a case is exercised. Fortescue, *De Ll. Ang.*, c. 51, says, that after the judges were risen at eleven of the clock from hearing of causes at Westminster, 'Placitantes tunc se divertunt *ad perrisum*, et alibi, consulentes cum *servientibus ad legem* (serjeants) et aliis conciliariis suis.'—S. *Parvis* means, however, a church-porch, in this case probably at Westminster, where lawyers met, as described by Speght. De Joinville furnishes another illustration:—'It was customary, after the Lord de Neeles, the good Lord de Soissons, and others that were about the King's person, had heard mass, for us to go and hear the pleadings *at the gateway*, which is now called the Court of Requests.'—*Mem. of St. Louis*.

² He had at his fingers' ends all legal cases and *dooms*, or decrees, which had been ruled in the courts of law since the time of William the Conqueror.

³ *Pynche* appears to mean, to find fault with, except against, as in the anecdote told in the notes to *Marmion*, of the Knight who bore on his shield a falcon, with the motto:—

'I bear a falcon fairest of flight,
Whoso pincheth at her, his death is dight
In graith.'

Thus also in Chaucer's *Ballade of the Village*, Fortune says:—

'Thou pinchest at my mutabilitie.'

And every statute couthe he pleyn by roote.
 He rood but hoonly in a medled coote,
 Gird with a seynt of silk, with barres smale;
 Of his array telle I no lenger tale.

A FRANKLEYN¹ ther was in his companye;
 Whit was his berde, as the dayesye.
 Of his complexioun he was sangwyn.
 Wel loved he in the morn a sop of wyn.
 To lyve in delite was al his wone,
 For he was Epicurius owne sone,
 That heeld opynyoun that pleyn delyt
 Was verrailly felicitye perfyte.
 An househaldere, and that a gret, was he;
 Seynt Julian² he was in his countré.
 His breed, his ale, was alway after oon;
 A bettre envyned man was nowher noon.
 Withoute bake mete was never his hous,
 Of fleissch and fisch, and that so plentyvous,
 It snewed in his hous of mete and drynk,
 Of alle deyntees that men cowde thynke.
 Aftur the sondry sesouns of the yeer,
 He chaunged hem at mete and at soper.
 Ful many a fat partrich had he in mewe,
 And many a brem and many a luce in stewe.
 Woo was his cook, but if his sauce were
 Poynant and scharp,³ and redy al his gere.
 His table dormant in his halle alway
 Stood redy covered al the longe day.
 At sessions ther was he lord and sire.
 Ful ofte tyme he was knight of the schire.

¹ Fortescue (*De Ll. Ang.*, c. 29) describes a Franklin as 'Paterfamilias, magnis ditatus possessionibus.'

² 'Ce fut celluy Julien qui est requis de ceux qui cheminent pour avoir bon hostel.'—*Leg. Dorée*. Having by mischance slain his father and mother, as a penance, he established a hospital near a dangerous ford, where he lodged and fed travellers gratuitously.

³ *Sauce piquante* is still familiar to *gourmets*.

An anlas¹ and a gipser² al of silk
 Heng at his gerdul, whit as morne mylk.
 A schirreve hadde he ben, and a counter;
 Was nowher such a worthi vavaser.

AN HABURDASSHER and a CARPENTER,
 A WEBBE, a DEYER, and a TAPICER,
 Weren with us eeke, clothed in oo lyveré,³
 Of a solempne and gret fraternite.
 Ful freissh and newe here gere piked was;
 Here knyfes were i-chapud nat with bras,
 But al with silver wrought ful clene and wel,
 Here gurdles and here pouches every del.
 Wel semed eche of hem a fair burgeys,
 To sitten in a geldehalle on the deys.⁴
 Every man for the wisdom that he can,
 Was schaply for to ben an aldurman.
 For catel hadde they inough and rente,
 And eek here wyfes wolde it wel assente;
 And elles certeyn hadde thei ben to blame.
 It is right fair for to be clept *madame*,
 And for to go to vigilies⁵ al byfore,
 And han a mantel rialy i-bore.

¹ A falcion or woodknife, which I gather out of Matthew Paris, p. 535, where he writeth thus. 'Quorum unus videns occiduum partem dorsi (of Richard Earl Marshal, then fighting for his life in Ireland) minus armis communitam, percussit eum in posteriora loriceam sublevando cum quodam genere cultelli, quod vulgariter analacitus nuncupatur.'—S.

² A purse. In Albert Dürer's beautiful etching of the Entombment, Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man, like the Franklin, has a large purse with tassels hanging at his girdle.

³ These tradesmen all belonged to, and wore the dress of, one livery or guild.

⁴ One of the good and kindly customs of the middle ages,—a custom which was till lately observed by the Hidalgos in Spain,—was for the whole household to dine together in the great hall; but at one end was a raised platform or deys, where persons of higher rank were served, as is still the practice in our Colleges. The word *dais* is still used in East Anglia for a raised platform.

⁵ It was the manner in times past, upon festival evens, called vigils, for parishioners to meet in their church-houses, or church-yards, and

A Cook thei hadde with hem for the nones,
 To boyle chyknes and the mary bones,
 And poudre marchant, tart, and galyngale.
 Wel cowde he knowe a draught of Londone ale.
 He cowde roste, sethe, broille, and frie,
 Make mortreux, and wel bake a pye.
 But gret harm was it, as it semede me,
 That on his schyne a mormal hadde he;
 For blankmanger he made with the beste.

A SCHIPMAN was ther, wonyng fer by weste:
 For ought I woot, he was of Dertemouthe.
 He rood upon a rouncy, as he couthe,¹
 In a gowne of faldyng to the kne.
 A dagger hangyng on a laas hadde he
 Aboute his nekke under his arm adoun.
 The hote somer had maad his hew al broun,
 And certainly he was a good felawe.
 Ful many a draught of wyn had he drawe
 From Burdeux-ward, whil that the chapman sleep.²
 Of nyce conscience took he no keep.
 If that he foughte, and hadde the heigher hand,
 By water he sente hem hoom to every land.
 But of his craft to rikne wel the tydes,
 His stremes and his dangers him bisides,
 His herbergh and his mone, his lodemenage,
 Ther was non such from Hulle to Cartage.
 Hardy he was, and wys to undertake;
 With many a tempest hadde his berd ben schake.

there to have a drinking fit for the time. Here they used to end many quarrels betwixt neighbour and neighbour. Hither came the wives in comely manner, and they that were of the better sort had their mantles carried with them, as well for show as to keep them from cold at table.—S. These are probably what are forbidden in the 88th Canon of the Church of England, under the name of 'feasts, banquets, suppers, churchales, drinkings,' &c.

¹ As well as he knew how. It seems that sailors have always been bad horsemen.

² While the merchants, or supercargo, to whom the wine belonged, were asleep, he used to tap a cask.

He knew wel alle the havenes, as thei were,
 From Scotland to the cape of Fyncstere,
 And every cryk in Bretayne and in Spayne;
 His barge y-clepud was the Magdelayne.

Ther was also a DOCTOUR OF PHISIK,
 In al this world ne was ther non him lyk
 To speke of phisik and of surgerye;
 For he was groundud in astronomye.¹
 He kepte his pacient wondrously wel
 In houres by his magik naturel.²
 Wel cowde he fortune the ascendent
 Of his ymages for his pacient.
 He knew the cause of every maladye,
 Were it of cold, or hete, or moyst, or drye,
 And where thei engendrid, and of what humour;
 He was a verrey parfight practisour.
 The cause i-knowe, and of his harm the roote,
 Anon he gaf the syke man his boote.
 Ful redy hadde he his apotecaries,
 To sende him dragges, and his letuariez,
 For eche of hem made othur for to wynne;
 Here friendschipe was not newe to begynne.
 Wel knew he the olde Esculapius,
 And Deiscorides, and eeke Rufus;
 Old Ypocras, Haly, and Galien;³
 Serapyon, Razis, and Avycen;

¹ A great part of the medical practice of the middle ages consisted in administering remedies according to the position of the planets in the heavens, as Mr. Wright observes. At the present time the horses and cows in most of the farms in England are dosed according to the astrological directions in Zadkiel's Almanack.

² The reading in the text, which is from the Harl. MS., conveys a piece of irony which is lost in the common one, *a ful gret del*. The practice of natural magic is alluded to in the *House of Fame*. It was probably derived from the classical heathenism.—*Vide HOR. Sat.*, lib. i. 8.

³ Hippocrates and Galen were spelled Ypocras, or Hippocras, and Gallien by writers in the middle ages. These and the rest of the authors here named were the great medical authorities of those times.

Averrois, Damescen, and Constantyn;
 Bernard, and Gatisden, and Gilbertyn.
 Of his diete mesurable was he,
 For it was of no superfluité,
 But of gret norisching and digestible.
 His studie was but litel on the Bible.¹
 In sangwin and in pers he clad was al,
 Lined with taffata and with sendal.
 And yit he was but esy in dispençe;
 He kepte that he wan in pestilence.²
 For gold in phisik is a cordial;
 Therefore he lovede gold in special.

A good WIF was ther of byside BATHE,
 But sche was somdel deaf, and that was skathe.
 Of cloth-makyng³ she hadde such an haunt,
 Sche passed hem of Ypris and of Gaunt.
 In al the parisshe wyf ne was ther noon
 That to the offryng⁴ byforn hire schulde goon,
 And if ther dide, certeyn so wroth was sche,
 That sche was thanne out of alle charité.
 Hire keverchefs weren ful fyne of grounde;
 I durste swere they weyghede ten pounde⁵
 That on the Sonday were upon hire heed.
 Hir hosen were of fyn scarlett reed,
 Ful streyte y-teyed, and schoos ful moyste and newe.
 Bold was hir face, and fair, and reed of hewe.

¹ See *post*, Pardoner's Prologue.

² Perhaps, as Mr. Wright suggests, in allusion to the great pestilence which devastated Europe in the thirteenth century, and of which there is such a magnificent description in the opening of the *Decameron*.

³ The West of England to this day vies with Yorkshire in the excellence of its cloth.

⁴ This was probably the offering on relic-Sunday, when the congregation went up to the altar in succession to kiss the relics. 'But the relics we must kiß and offer unto, especially on relic-Sunday.'—*Book of Homilies*.

⁵ The high and massive head-dresses of this period, often to be seen on brasses, are still worn by the peasants of Caux, in Normandy, called Cauchoises, and are very becoming.

Sche was a worthy womman al hire lyfe,
 Housbondes atte chirche dore¹ hadde sche fyfe,
 Withouten othur companye in youthe;
 But thereof needeth nought to speke as nouthe.
 And thries hadde sche ben at Jerusalem;
 Sche hadde passed many a straunge streem;
 At Rome sche hadde ben, and at Boloyn,
 In Galice at seynt Jame, and at Coloyne.²
 Sche cowde moche of wandryng by the weye.
 Gattothud³ was sche, sothly for to seye.
 Uppon an amblere esely sche sat,
 Wymplid ful wel, and on hire heed an hat
 As brood as is a bocler or a targe;
 A foot-mantel aboute hire hupes large,
 And on hire feet a paire of spores scharpe.⁴
 In felawschipe wel cowde lawghe and carpe.
 Of remedies of love sche knew parchaunce,
 For of that art sche knew the olde daunce.

A good man was ther of religioun,
 And was a pore PERSON of a toun;⁵
 But riche he was of holy thought and werk.
 He was also a lerned man, a clerk
 That Cristes gospel gladly wolde preche;
 His parischens devoutly wolde he teche.

¹ According to the old custom, the priest married the couple at the church door, and immediately afterwards proceeded to the altar to celebrate mass, at which the newly-married persons communicated. The rubrics in the modern English office are to the same effect.

² She had probably gone to Cologne on a pilgrimage to the relics of the Three Kings, or Wise Men of the East, said to be there preserved. The body of St. James the Apostle was supposed to have been carried in a ship without a rudder to Galicia, and was preserved at Compostella, whither there was a prodigious resort of pilgrims.

³ Speght reads *cat-tothed*, of which the sense seems more obvious. It would mean of teeth uneven and far asunder, a peculiarity which gives a bold look, and so may be considered characteristic.

⁴ It appears she bestrode her horse, like the *païsannes* in France.

⁵ Parson or parish priest, so called because he is the *persona ecclesie*, the representative or mouth-piece, through whom the Church, that is the Christians, in that particular parish, addresses its worship to God. —See BLACKSTONE'S *Comm.*—*Town* here means *townland* or parish.

Benigne he was, and wonder diligent,
 And in adversite ful pacient;
 And such he was i-proved ofte sithes.
 Ful loth were him to curse for his tythes,¹
 But rather wolde he geven out of dowte,
 Unto his pore parisschens aboute,
 Of his offrynge, and eek of his substaunce.²
 He cowde in litel thing han suffisance.
 Wyd was his parisch, and houses fer asondur,
 But he ne lafte not for reyne ne thondur,
 In siknesse ne in meschief to visite
 The ferrest in his parissche, moche and lite,
 Uppon his feet, and in his hond a staf.
 This noble ensample unto his scheep he gaf,
 That ferst he wroughte, and after that he taughte,
 Out of the gospel he tho wordes caughte,
 And this figure he addid yit therto,
 That if gold ruste, what schulde yren doo?
 For if a prest be foul, on whom we truste,
 No wondur is a lewid man to ruste;
 And schame it is, if that a prest take kepe,
 A schiten schepperd and a clene schepe;
 Wel oughte a prest ensample for to give,
 By his clenness, how that his scheep schulde lyve.
 He sette not his benefice to huyre,
 And lefte his scheep encombred in the myre,
 And ran to Londone, unto seynte Poules,
 To seeken him a chaunterie for soules,³
 Or with a brethurhede be withholde;⁴
 But dwelte at hoom, and kepte wel his folde,

¹ Refusal to pay tithes was punishable with the lesser excommunication.

² Of what he obtained by the voluntary offerings of his parishioners, as well as by his benefice.

³ A chantry for souls was an endowment for a priest to sing or chant masses for the benefit of the souls of the founders. The parson did not leave a curate to perform his parochial duties, and seek one of these sinecures for himself in Saint Paul's.

⁴ To be maintained in a religious house.

So that the wolfe ne made it not myscarye.
 He was a schepperde and no mercenarie;¹
 And though he holy were, and vertuous,
 He was to senful man nought dispitous,
 Ne of his speche daungerous ne digne,
 But in his teching discret and benigne.
 To drawe folk to heven by fairnesse,
 By good ensample, was his busynesse:
 But it were eny persone obstinat,
 What so he were of high or lowe estat,
 Him wolde he snybbe scharply for the nones.
 A better preest I trowe ther nowher non is.
 He waytud after no pompe ne reverence,
 Ne maked him a spiced conscience,²
 But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
 He taught, and ferst he folwed it himselve.

With him ther was a PLOUGHMAN, his brothur,
 That hadde i lad of dong ful many a fothur.
 A trewe swynker and a good was hee,
 Lyvyng in pees and parfight charitee.
 God loved he best with al his trewe herte
 At alle tymes, though him gained or smerte,
 And thanne his neighebour right as himselve.
 He wolde threisshe, and therto dyke and delve,

¹ John x. 11.

² The meaning is not obvious, and Tyrwhitt professes not to understand it. It may signify that his conscience was not sophisticated by the subtilties of casuistry, compared to far-fetched spices, but guided by the plain words of Scripture.

It is quite natural that Chaucer, the friend of John of Gaunt, should praise the parochial clergy who were poor, and therefore not formidable, at the expense of the rich monastic orders, who formed the only barrier which then existed against the despotic power of the aristocracy. It should also be remembered that the same poverty which made the secular clergy humble and frugal, left them also illiterate; and that it is to the Benedictines, and their magnificent libraries, that we owe the preservation, in an iron age, not only of the Fathers, but of Homer, of Virgil, and of Cicero.—See *Ld. Macaulay's* excellent remarks upon this subject in his *History of England*, vol. i. p. 6.

For Cristes sake, with every pore wight,
 Withouten huyre, if it laye in his might.
 His tythes payede he ful faire and wel,
 Bathe of his owne swynk and his catel.
 In a tabbard he rood upon a merc.¹

Ther was also a reeve and a mellere,
 A sompnour and a pardoner also,
 A maunciple, and my self, ther was no mo.

The MELLERE was a stout carl for the nones,
 Ful big he was of braun, and cck of boones;
 That prevede wel, for over al ther he cam,
 At wrastlyng he wolde bere away the ram.²
 He was schort schuldred, broode, a thikke knarre,
 Ther nas no dore that he nold heve of harre,
 Or breke it with a rennyng with his heed.
 His berd as ony sowe or fox was reed,
 And therto brood, as though it were a spade.
 Upon the cop right of his nose he hade
 A werte, and theron stood a tuft of heres,
 Reede as the berstles of a souwes eeres.
 His nose-thurles blake were and wyde.
 A swerd and a bocler baar he by his side,
 His mouth as wyde was as a gret forneys.
 He was a jangler, and a golyardeys,
 And that was most of synne and harlotries.
 Wel cowde he stele corn, and tollen thries;³
 And yet he had a thombe of gold pardé.⁴
 A whight cote and blewe hood wered he.

¹ The ploughman's tabard was probably what we should call a blouse, or smock-frock. No one of any pretensions rode upon a mare in the middle ages.

² A ram was the usual prize at wrestling matches.—See the *Coke's Tale of Gamelyn*.

³ Besides the usual payment in money for grinding corn, millers are always allowed what is called 'toll,' amounting to 4lbs. out of every sack of flour.

⁴ If the allusion be, as is most probable, to the old proverb, *Every honest miller has a thumb of gold*, the passage may mean, that our miller, notwithstanding his thefts, was an *honest miller*,—i. e., as honest as his brethren.—T.

A baggepipe¹ cowde he blowe and sowne,
And therwithal he brought us out of towne.

A gentil MAUNCIPLE was ther of a temple,
Of which achatours mighten take exemple
For to be wys in beyying of vitaille.
For whethur that he payde, or took by taille,²
Algate he wayted so in his acate,
That he was ay biforn and in good state.
Now is not that of God a ful fair grace,
That such a lewed mannes wit schal pace
The wisdom of an heep of lernede men?
Of maystres hadde moo than thries ten,
That were of lawe expert and curious;
Of which ther were a doseyn in an house,
Worthi to be stiwardes of rente and lond
Of any lord that is in Engeland,
To make him lyve by his propre good,
In honour detteles, but if he were wood,
Or lyve as scarsly as he can desire;
And able for to helpen al a schire
In any caas that mighte falle or happe;
And yit this maunciple sette here aller cappe.³

The REEVE was a sklendre colerik man,
His berd was schave as neigh as ever he can.
His heer was by his eres neighe⁴ i-shorn.
His top was dockud lyk a preest biforn.

¹ The bagpipe has long since disappeared from England, where it was once a favourite among the lower orders. In Albert Dürer's etching of the Nativity, one of the shepherds carries a bagpipe; and it may yet be seen in Italy.

² Marked the reckoning on a tally, bought on credit; from *tailler*, to cut.

³ To set a man's cap is to cheat him. *Aller* is the genitive plural of *alle*, and the passage means, therefore, set the cap of them all,—i. e., cheated them all. The same construction occurs afterwards—'Up roos our hoste, and was our althur (*aller*) cok,' was cock for us all,—i. e., wakened and gathered us together as a cock does his hens. In modern German, *aller* is used in the same way, as *der aller beste*, the best of all.

⁴ This is the reading of the Harl. MS. Mr. Wright substitute *rounde*.

Ful longe wern his leggas, and ful lene,
 Al like a staff, ther was no calf y-sene.
 Wel cowde he kepe a gerner and a bynne ;
 Ther was non auditour cowde on him wynne.
 Wel wist he by the drought, and by the reyn,
 The yeeldyng of his seed, and of his greyn.
 His lordes scheep, his nete,¹ and his dayerie,
 His swyn, his hors, his stoor, and his pultrie,
 Was holly in this reeves governynge,
 And by his covenaut gaf the rekenynge,
 Syn that his lord was twenti yeer of age ;
 Ther couthe noman bringe him in arrerage.
 Ther nas ballif, ne herde, ne other hyne,
 That they ne knewe his sleight and his covyne ;
 They were adrad of him, as of the deth.
 His wonyng was ful fair upon an heth,
 With grene trees i-schadewed was his place.
 He cowde bettre than his lord purchace.
 Ful riche he was i-stored prively,
 His lord wel couthe he plese subtilly,
 To geve and lene him of his owne good,
 And have a thank, a cote, and eek an hood.
 In youthe he lerned hadde a good mester ;
 He was a wel good wright, a carpenter.
 This reeve sat upon a wel good stot,²
 That was a pomely gray, and highte Scot.
 A long surcote of pers³ uppon he hadde,
 And by his side he bar a rusty bladde.

¹ The Harl. MS. reads *meet*, but all the editions *nete*, which is evidently the true reading. The neat stock comes in naturally in the enumeration of the different kinds of cattle; but the Reeve would have nothing to do with the keeping of his landlord's meat.

² Speght interprets this a young horse. It properly means a young bullock; but the names of young animals are apt to be indiscriminately applied to different species. The name given to the horse of the Reeve, who lived at Bawdeswell, in Norfolk, is a curious instance of Chaucer's accuracy: for to this day there is scarcely a farm in Norfolk or Suffolk in which one of the horses is not called Scot. As the name has no meaning, it must be attributed to an immemorial tradition.

³ Harl. MS., *blew*. *Pers*, Mr. Wright says, was of a sky-blue colour.

Of Northfolk was this reeve of which I telle,
 Byside a toun men callen Baldeswelle.
 Tukkud he was, as is a frere, aboute,
 And ever he rood the hynderest of the route.

A SOMPNOUR was ther with us in that place,
 That hadde a fyr-reed cherubynes face,¹
 For sawceflem he was, with eyghen narwe.
 As hoot he was, and leccherous, as a sparwe,
 With skalled browes blak, and piled berd ;
 Of his visage children weren sore aferd.
 Ther nas quyksilver, litarge, ne brimstone,
 Boras, ceruce, ne oille of tartre noon,²
 Ne oynement that wolde clense and byte,
 That him might helpen of his whelkes white,
 Ne of the knobbes sitting on his cheekes.
 Wel loved he garleek, oynouns, and ek leekes,
 And for to drinke strong wyn reed as blood.
 Thanne wolde he speke, and crye as he were wood.
 And whan that he wel dronken hadde the wyn,
 Than wolde he speke no word but Latyn.
 A fewe termes hadde he, tuo or thre,
 That he hadde lerned out of som decree ;
 No wondur is, he herde it al the day ;
 And eek ye knowe wel, how that a jay
 Can clepe Watte, as wel as can the pope.
 But who so wolde in othur thing him grope,
 Thanne hadde he spent al his philosophie,
 Ay, *Questio quid juris*,³ wolde he crye,
 He was a gentil harlot⁴ and a kynde ;
 A bettre felaw schulde men nowher fynde.

¹ H. Stephens, *Apol. Herod*, lib. i. c. 30, quotes the same thought from a French epigram:—' Nos grand docteurs au Cherubin visage.'—T.

² Usual remedies in the *Materia Medica* of that period for scorbutic eruptions.

³ This kind of question occurs frequently in *Ralph de Hengham*. After having stated a case he adds, *Quid juris?* and then proceeds to give the answer to it.—T.

⁴ The name of harlot was originally given to men as well as women,

He wolde suffre for a quart of wyn
 A good felawe to han his concubyn
 A twelve moneth, and excuse him atte fulle
 And prively a fynch eek cowde he pulle.
 And if he fond owher a good felawe,
 He wolde teche him to have non awe
 In such a caas of the archedecknes curs,¹
 But if a mannes sole were in his purs ;
 For in his purs he scholde punysshed be.
 ' Purs is the ercedeknes helle,' quod he.
 But well I woot he lyeth right in dede ;
 Of cursyng oweth ech gulty man to drede ;
 For curs wol slee right as assoillyng saveth ;
 And also ware of him a *significavit*.²
 In daunger³ he hadde at his own assise
 The yonge gurles of the diocise,
 And knew here counseil, and was al here red.⁴
 A garland⁵ had he set upon his heed,
 As gret as it were for an ale-stake ;
 A bokeler had he maad him of a cake.⁶
 With him ther rood a gentil PARDONER
 Of Rouncival,⁷ his frend and his comper,

as in the *Roman de la Rose*, *roi des Ribaulx* is translated *king of harlots*.

¹ The meaning is,—he would teach his friends to consider the Arch-deacon's excommunication as a mere matter of money, because it could be bought off.

² *Significavit* means the writ *de excommunicato capiendo*, being its initial word.

³ In his jurisdiction.

⁴ Speght reads, *was of her red*, which gives a more obvious sense; but in either case the passage means, *was of their counsel*, gave them his advice.

⁵ Of this custom there is an example in the *Knight's Tale*, page 159.

⁶ A grotesque trick, such as the common people delight in. The peasants of Rouen, on their march to Paris to join in the Revolution of 1830, in the same spirit, carried their loaves of bread stuck on their pikes.

⁷ Of Rounceval. Tyrwhitt supposed that this was the name of some fraternity, and states that there was an *Hospital Beatae Mariæ de Rounceyvalle*, in Charing, London.

That streyt was comen from the court of Rome.
 Ful lowde he sang, Come hider, love, to me.¹
 This sompnour bar to him a stif burdoun,
 Was nevere trompe of half so gret a soun.
 This pardoner hadde heer as yelwe as wex,
 But smothe it heng, as doth a strike of flex;
 By unces hynges his lokkes that he hadde,
 And therwith he his schuldres overspradde.
 Ful thenne it lay, by culpons on and oon,
 But hood, for jolitee, ne wered he noon,
 For it was trussud up in his walet.
 Him thought he rood al of the newe get,²
 Dischevele, sauf his cappe, he rood al bare.
 Suche glaryng eyghen hadde he as an hare.
 A vernicle³ hadde he sowed on his cappe.
 His walet lay byforn him in his lappe,
 Bret ful of pardoun⁴ come from Rome al hoot.
 A voys he hadde as smale as eny goot.
 No berd ne hadde he, ne never scholde have,
 As smothe it was as it ware late i-schave;
 I trowe he were a geldyng or a mare.
 But of his craft, fro Berwyk unto Ware,
 Ne was ther such another pardoner.
 For in his male he hadde a pilwebeer,

¹ This was probably the burthen of some popular song. The fact of *to me* rhyming to Rome, illustrates the maunier in which the final *e* must be pronounced in Chaucer's poetry.

² Of the new fashion. *Gette* or *gett* (for the MSS. differ) is used in the same sense by Occleve, *de Reg. Princ.* The Pardoner rode without the usual hood on his head, dischevele or uncovered; he had only his cappe, cope, or short cloak.

³ A painting of the face of Christ. 'Inter has feminas una fuit Bernice, sive Vcronice, vulgo Veronica, quæ sudarium Christo exhibens, ut faciem sudore et sanguine madentem abstergeret, ab eo illud recepit, cum impressa in illo ejusdem Christi effigie, ut habet Christiana traditio.'—*Corn. a Lapide in S. Matt.* xxvii. 32.

⁴ Brim-full of indulgences granted by the Court of Rome. The theory of pardons or indulgences is that they are commutations, in consideration of some act of devotion, of the long temporal penalties for sin required by the Canons of the Primitive Church.

Which, that he saide, was oure lady veyl :
 He seide, he hadde a gobet of the seyl
 That seynt Petur hadde, whan that he wente
 Uppon the see, till Jhesu Crist him hente.
 He hadde a cros of latoun ful of stones,
 And in a glas he hadde pigges bones.
 But with thise reliques, whanne that he fand
 A pore persoun dwellyng uppon land,
 Upon a day he gat him more moneye
 Than that the persoun gat in monthes tweye.
 And thus with feyned flaterie and japes,
 He made the persoun and the people his apes.
 But trewely to tellen atte laste,
 He was in churche a noble ecclesiaste.
 Wel cowde he rede a lessoun or a storye,
 But altherbest¹ he sang an offertorie ;²
 For wel wyst he, whan that song was songe,
 He moste preche, and wel affyle his tunge,
 To wynne silver, as he right wel cowde ;
 Therefore he sang ful meriely and lowde.

Now have I told you schortly in a clause
 Thestat, tharray, the nombre, and eek the cause
 Why that assembled was this companye
 In Southwerk at this gentil ostelrie,
 That highte the Tabbard, faste by the Belle.
 But now is tyme to yow for to telle
 How that we bare us in that ilke night,
 Whan we were in that ostelrie alight ;
 And aftur wol I telle of oure viage,
 And al the remenaunt of oure pilgrimage.

¹ *Altherbest* means best of all ; so the German *allerbeste*—See *ante*, p. 101, note 3.

² A text of Scripture said or sung after the Nicene Creed in the mass, during which the people made their offerings ; and immediately after followed the sermon. ‘And while we offer (that we should not be weary or repent us of our cost) the music and minstrelsy goeth merrily all the offertory time.’—*Book of Homilies*.

But ferst I pray you of your curtesie,
 That ye ne rette¹ it nat my vilanye,
 Though that I speke al pleyne in this matere,
 To telle you here wordes and here cheere ;
 Ne though I speke here wordes propurly.
 For this ye knowen al so wel as I,
 Who so schal telle a tale aftur a man,
 He moste reherce, as neigh as ever he can,
 Every word, if it be in his charge,
 Al speke he never so rudely ne large ;
 Or elles he moot telle his tale untrewē,
 Or feyne thing, or fynde wordes newe.
 He may not spare, though he were his brothur ;
 He moste as wel sey oo word as anothur.
 Crist spak himself ful broode in holy writ,
 And wel ye woot no vilanye is it.
 Eke Plato seith, who so that can him rede,
 The wordes mot be cosyn² to the dede.
 Also I pray you to forgeve it me,
 Al have I folk nat set in here degre
 Here in this tale, as that thei schulde stonde ;
 My witt is schorte,³ ye may wel undurstonde.
 Greet cheere made oure ost us everichon,
 And to the souper sette he us ancn ;
 And served us with vitaille atte beste.
 Strong was the wyn, and wel to drynke us leste.

¹ That you interpret it not as a proof of my base breeding. [The word *rette*, sometimes *arette*, is from the Icelandic *rétta*, which means to adjudge, to give sentence.]

² From Boethius, *De Consolatione*, lib. iii., thus translated by Chaucer—'That needs the words mote been cosins to the things of which they speaken.' His excuse for the broadness of the language which he puts into the mouths of his pilgrims goes upon the assumption that he is relating an incident which actually took place, and which he is therefore bound not to falsify. This piece of *naïveté* is affected to give an air of reality to the fiction upon which the poem is founded.

³ Harl. MS., *thynne*.

A semely man oure ooste was withalle
 For to han been a marchal in an halle ;
 A large man was he with eyghen stepe,
 A fairere burgeys is ther noon in Chepe :
 Bold of his speche, and wys and well i-taught,
 And of manhede lakkede he right naught.
 Eke therto he was right a mery man,
 And after soper playen he bygan,
 And spak of myrthe among othur thinges,
 Whan that we hadde maad our rekenynges ;
 And sayde thus : ' Lo, lordynges, trewely
 Ye ben to me right welcome hertily :
 For by my trouthe, if that I schal not lye,
 I ne saugh this yeer so mery a companye
 At oones in this herbergh as is now.
 Fayn wold I do yow merthe, wiste I how.
 And of a merthe I am right now bythought,
 To doon you eese, and it schal coste nought.
 Ye goon to Caunturbury ; God you speede,
 The blisful martir quyte you youre meede !
 And wel I woot, as ye gon by the weye,
 Ye schapen yow to talken and to pleye ;
 For trewely comfort ne merthe is noon
 To ryde by the weye domb as a stoon ;
 And therfore wol I make you disport,
 As I seyde erst, and do you som confort.
 And if yow liketh alle by oon assent
 Now for to standen at my juggement ;
 And for to werken as I schal you seye,
 To morwe, whan ye riden by the weye,
 Now by my fadres soule that is deed,
 But ye be merye, smyteth of myn heed.
 Hold up youre hond withoute more speche.'
 Oure counseil was not longe for to seche ;
 Us thought it nas nat worth to make it wys,¹
 And graunted him withoute more avys,

¹ To make it a matter of wisdom or deliberation. So in the *Reeve's Tale*, *straunge made it* signifies the priest made it a matter of difficulty.
 —T. See p. 222.

And bad him seie his verdite, as him leste.
 'Lordynges,' quoth he, 'now herkeneth for the beste;
 But taketh not, I pray you, in disdayn;
 This is the poynt, to speken schort and playn,
 That ech of yow to schorte with youre weie,
 In this viage, schal telle tales tweye,
 To Caunturburi-ward, I mene it so,¹
 And hom-ward he schal tellen othur tuo,
 Of adventures that ther han bifalle.
 And which of yow that bereth him best of alle,
 That is to seye, that telleth in this caas
 Tales of best sentence and of solas,
 Schal han a soper at your alther cost
 Here in this place sittynge by this post,
 Whan that we comen ageyn from Canturbery.
 And for to make you the more mery,
 I wol myselven gladly with you ryde,
 Right at myn owen cost, and be youre gyde.
 And whoso wole my juggement withseie
 Schal paye for al we spenden by the weye.
 And if ye vouchesauf that it be so,
 Telle me anon, withouten wordes moo,
 And I wole erely schappe me therfore.'
 This thing was graunted, and oure othus swore
 With ful glad herte, and prayden him also
 That he would vouchesauf for to doon so,
 And that he wolde ben oure governour,
 And of our tales jugge and reportour,
 And sette a souper at a certeyn prys;
 And we wolde rewled be at his devys,

¹ Tyrwhitt proposes to read,—

I mene it o,
And homward he shall tellen other to,

In order to reconcîle the original agreement with the actual number of tales recounted. But besides the awkwardness of the expression, and the fact that there is no authority for it in the MSS., it seems much preferable to adopt Mr. Wright's judicious theory, that the poem was left in an unfinished state by Chaucer at his death, and was arranged for publication, from detached papers, by his literary executor.

In heygh and lowe; and thus by oon assent
 We been acorded to his juggement.
 And therupon the wyn was fet anoon;
 We dronken, and to reste wente echoon,
 Withouten eny lengere taryngc.
 A morwe whan that the day bigan to sprynge,
 Up roos oure ost, and was oure althur cok,¹
 And gaderud us togider all in a flok,
 And forth we riden a litel more than paas,²
 Unto the waterynge of saint Thomas.³
 And there oure ost bigan his hors areste,
 And seyde; 'Lordus, herkeneth if yow leste.
 Ye woot youre forward, and I it you recorde.
 If eve-song and morwe-song accorde,⁴
 Let se now who schal telle first a tale.
 As evere I moote drinke wyn or ale,
 Who so be rebel to my juggement
 Schal paye for al that by the weye is spent.
 Now draweth cut,⁵ er that we forther twynne;
 Which that hath the schortest schal bygynne.'
 'Sire knight,' quoth he, 'maister and my lord,
 Now draweth cut, for that is myn acord.
 Cometh ner,' quoth he, 'my lady prioress;
 And ye, sir clerk, lat be your schamfastnesse,
 Ne studieth nat; ley hand to, every man.'
 Anon to drawen every wight bigan,
 And schortly for to tellen as it was,
 Were it by aventure, or sort, or cas,

¹ See *ante*, p. 101, note 3.

² *To pace* means to walk; *a little more than pace* will therefore mean a little faster than walking, *i. e.*, at a slow trot.

³ Mr. Wright says, that the *Watering of St. Thomas*, mentioned frequently by the old dramatists, was at the second milestone on the old Canterbury-road.

⁴ Apparently a proverbial expression alluding to the services of the Church, and meaning, if you are resolved in the morning to keep the promise made over night.

⁵ Draw lots. Froissart calls it, *tirer à la longue paille*, to draw for the long straw. *Cut*, then, means, the straw cut into different lengths.

The soth is this, the cut fil to the knight,
 Of which full glad and blithe was every wight;
 And telle he moste his tale as was resoun,
 By forward and by composicioun,
 As ye han herd; what needeth wordes moo?
 And whan this goode man seigh that it was so,
 As he that wys was and obedient
 To kepe his forward by his fre assent,
 He seyde: 'Syn I schal bygynne the game,
 What, welcome be thou cut, a Goddus name!¹
 Now lat us ryde, and herkneth what I seye.'

And with that word we ridden forth oure weye;
 And he bigan with right a merie chere
 His tale, and seide right in this manere.

THE KNIGHTES TALE.

[THE outline of this tale is taken from the *Theseida*, an heroic poem in twelve books by Boccaccio. Tyrwhitt conjectures that a literal translation of the *Theseida* had already appeared from the pen of Chaucer, who enumerates it along with his other works in the *Legende of Gode Women*, under the name of *Al the Love of Palamon and Arcite*. This translation, if it ever existed, is now lost; but it has reappeared, as he supposes, in the *Canterbury Tales*, concentrated and improved in this charming story of chivalry, so appropriately narrated by the 'perfight, gentil knight.'

The origin of the story is involved in obscurity. Tyrwhitt thinks it scarcely credible that it is of Boccaccio's own invention; and the assertion of the novelist that he translated it into 'vulgar Latin,' meaning Italian, from *una antichissima storia*, he conceives to be a mere literary fiction, after the manner of the French writers of romances, who almost always

¹ It is characteristic of the Knight's good breeding and knowledge of the world to tell his tale frankly and cheerfully, and without endeavouring to excuse himself.

profess to have translated from some old *Latin* chronicle preserved at St. Denys. He inclines to the theory that it is of Greek original, and that it assumed its present form as a popular romance, after the Norman princes had introduced the manners of chivalry into their Sicilian and Italian dominions.

On the other hand, it should be remembered that the opening of the *Theseida*, as well as of the *Knights Tale*, and many passages throughout both poems, are palpably taken from the *Thebais* of Statius; and therefore, in the absence of any evidence of the existence of such a romance as Tyrwhitt supposes, it does not seem to be claiming too much for Boccaccio's powers of invention, to suppose that he adapted to his conception of heroic times, derived from the *Thebais*, the very ordinary plot of rival lovers staking the possession of their mistress on the fortune of single combat. The *incognito* of Œdipus at the court of Laius, and the sojourn of Polynices at that of Adrastus, might have suggested the idea of Arcite's return in disguise to Athens; and if the Lady Emilia, in accordance with chivalrous ideas, be substituted for the kingdom of Thebes, and Palamon and Arcite for Eteocles and Polynices, the *Thebais* supplies the story at once. If this theory be tenable, the change which the story undergoes in its transition from the spirit of the old mythology, delighting in the contemplation of a family goaded, from generation to generation, by the decrees of fate to the commission of incest and murder in their most horrible forms, to that of Christianity, even when demoralized by hatred, jealousy, and war, is deeply suggestive.

In obedience to the literary canon which requires that every epic poem shall consist of twelve books, the *Theseida* is swelled by tedious descriptions, which the English poet, either from taste or the necessities of his plan, has happily curtailed, or wholly omitted. In the lines—

His spiryt chaunged was, and wente ther
As I cam never, I can nat tellen wher;
Therefore I stynt.

Chaucer is supposed by Tyrwhitt to have intended to ridicule

Boccaccio's pompous description of the passage of Arcite's soul to Heaven, and the reader cannot but feel obliged to him for abridging the pedantic catalogue given in the *Theseida* of the heroes of antiquity who took part in the tournament.

Although all readers must appreciate Tyrwhitt's extensive learning and zealous industry in illustrating *The Canterbury Tales* from every possible source, few will now agree with his criticism on the incongruity of Chaucer's treatment of heroic subjects. A story of heroic times, clothed in the costume of chivalry, appears to him as incongruous as Macbeth attired in the square-tailed coat and knee-breeches of the reign of George the Second. But if Chaucer, instead of giving us his own conception of how Theseus looked and spoke, and how Palamon and Arcite loved and fought, had searched the ancients for precedents of heroic speeches, and classic loves and combats, it may safely be affirmed that a new edition of *The Canterbury Tales* would not now be called for. The poet's aim should be to give an accurate picture, not necessarily of scenes as they actually took place, but of the conception he had of them in his own mind. In order to move the passions of his readers, it is necessary that his descriptions should be drawn direct from the stores of his own experience. What can be more insipid than a cento from the works of the ancients, in which no word or idea is permitted to appear unless it be authenticated, so to speak, by classical authority?

But it may still be objected, why then lay the scene in the heroic, rather than in the chivalrous ages? And to this it may be answered, that the remoteness of the scene enables the poet to indulge his fancy with greater freedom, and to invest with some degree of verisimilitude adventures which, if assigned to the contemporary age, would be rejected as improbable. It may be added, also, that the shadowy and mysterious forms of periods anterior to authentic history predispose the mind to those emotions which it is the poet's object to awaken.

It must be acknowledged that Chaucer, like Shakespeare,
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cared little from whence he obtained the raw material of his tales, provided he could impress them with the stamp of his own genius. He plagiarises, not only from others, but even from himself. This can hardly be attributed to poverty of imagination in the author of the *House of Fame*. It appears rather to be an instance of that *economy of genius* observable in the art of the middle ages, when every figure in a picture had its distinctive form and attitude, and when even the colour of each personage's dress was settled by tradition. The object of the artist, whether poet, painter, or architect, was to move the passions, not to display his own power of invention; he therefore, without scruple, adopted the historical form, or the well-known legend; and trusted to his mode of treatment, within the prescribed limits, for producing his effect. But, in truth, the interest of a poem is not in the least impaired by the knowledge that the *incidents* are not the product of the poet's own invention; on the contrary, if they are supposed to be founded on fact, the interest is increased. It is when the reader suspects that he is called upon to sympathise with *feelings* and *passions* which the poet himself never felt, and to picture to his imagination usages which the poet himself never realized, that he resents the attempt to impose upon him by fine words, and to harrow his soul with emotions at second-hand. Such is not Chaucer's plan; the leading incidents of the story he has received from others, but the conception and working out of the characters are all his own. The reader feels convinced that, in Theseus, the poet has given his own idea, probably derived from actual observation, of a chivalrous monarch, arbitrary from the habit of command, and hot-tempered, but generous and easily appeased; tenderly alive to the feelings and weaknesses of others, and endowed with that light-hearted gaiety and keen appreciation of humour, which are so often observed to accompany high breeding and a noble nature.

Tyrwhitt, in his matter-of-fact way, has noticed three principal circumstances in which Chaucer, departing from his original, has shown his superiority in the knowledge of

human nature and in poetical judgment. '1. By supposing Emilia to be seen first by Palamon, he gives him an advantage over his rival, which makes the catastrophe more consonant to poetical justice. 2. The picture which Boccaccio has exhibited of two young princes, violently enamoured of the same object without jealousy or rivalry, if not absolutely unnatural, is certainly very insipid and unpoetical. 3. As no consequence is to follow from their being seen by Emilia at this time, it is better, I think, to suppose, as Chaucer has done, that they are not seen by her.' He might have added, that a strict adherence to the *Theseida* in this last particular, would have deprived Theseus of one capital point in his witty reflections upon the folly of lovers.]

WHILOM, as olde stories tellen us,
 Ther was a duk that highte Theseus;
 Of Athenes he was lord and governour,
 And in his tyme swich a conquerour,
 That gretter was ther non under the sonne.
 Ful many a riche contre hadde he wonne;
 That with his wisdom and his chivalrie
 He conquered al the regne of Femynye,¹
 That whilom was i-cleped Cithea;²
 And weddede the queen Ipolita,
 And brought hire hoom with him in his contré
 With moche glorie and gret solempnité,
 And eek hire yonge suster Emelye.
 And thus with victorie and with melodye
 Lete I this noble duk to Athenes ryde,
 And al his ost, in armes him biside.
 And certes, if it nere to long to heere,
 I wolde han told yow fully the manere,
 How wonnen was the regne of Femenye
 By Theseus, and by his chivalrye;
 And of the grete bataille for the nones
 Bytwix Athenes³ and the Amazonas;

¹ Kingdom of the Amazons, so called from *femina*, a woman.

² Scythia.

³ Athenians.

And how asegid was Ypolita,
 The faire hardy quyen of Cithea;
 And of the feste that was at hire weddyng.
 And of the tempest¹ at hire hoom comynge;
 But al that thing I most as now forbere.
 I have, God wot, a large feeld to ere,
 And wayke ben the oxen in my plough,
 The remenaunt of the tale is long inough.
 I wol not lette eek non of al this rowte
 Lat every felawe telle his tale aboute,
 And lat see now who schal the soper wynne,
 And ther I lasse, I wolde agayn begynne.

This duk, of whom I make mencion,
 Whan he was comen almost unto the toun,
 In al his wele and in his moste pryde,
 He was war, as he cast his eyghe aside,
 Wher that ther kneled in the hye weye
 A compaignie of ladies, tweye and tweye,
 Ech after other, clad in clothes blake;
 But such a cry and such a woo they make,
 That in this world nys creature² lyvyng,
 That herde such another waymentyng,
 And of that cry ne wolde they never stenten,
 Til they the reynes of his bridel henten.
 'What folk be ye that at myn hom comynge
 Pertourben so my feste with cryenge?'
 Quod Theseus, 'have ye so gret envye
 Of myn honour, that thus compleyne and crie?

¹ Tyrwhitt for *tempest* reads *temple*, on the authority of two MSS., and supports his reading by a reference to the *Theseida*, which says nothing of a tempest, but, on the contrary, states that the passage—

'Tosto fornito (finito?) fu e senza pene;'

whereas Theseus is represented as making an offering, on his return, in the Temple of Pallas, on the same principle on which the knight makes his pilgrimage to the shrine of St. Thomas, on his safe return from the wars. Mr. Wright, however, rejects Tyrwhitt's reading, considering the MSS. not of sufficient authority. And it must be owned that to express a pilgrimage to a temple by the word '*temple*' is very unusual.

² This word is always a trisyllable, as in French.

Or who hath yow misboden, or offendid?
 And telleth me if it may ben amendid;
 And why that ye ben clad thus al in blak?

The oldest lady of hem alle spak,
 When sche had swowned with a dedly chere,
 That it was routhe for to seen or heere;
 And seyde: 'Lord, to whom Fortune hath geven
 Victorie, and as a conquerour lyven,¹
 Nought greveth us youre glorie and honour;
 But we beseken mercy and socour.
 Have mercy on oure woo and oure distresse.
 Som drope of pitee, thurgh youre gentillesse,
 Uppon us wrecchede wommen lat thou falle.
 For certus, lord, ther nys noon of us alle,
 That sche nath ben a duchesse or a queene;
 Now be we caytifs, as it is well seene:
 Thanked be Fortune, and hire false wheel,
 That noon estat assureth to ben weel.
 And certus, lord, to abiden youre presence
 Here in the temple of the goddesse Clemence
 We han ben waytynge al this fourteenight;
 Now helpe us, lord, syn it is in thy might.
 I wrecche, which that wepe and waylle thus,
 Was whilom wyf to kyng Capaneus,
 That starf at Thebes, cursed be that day;
 And alle we that ben in this array,
 And maken all this lamentacioun,
 We reften alle oure housbondes at the toun,
 Whil that the sege ther aboute lay.
 And yet the olde Creon, welaway!
 That lord is now of Thebes the citee,
 Fulfilde of ire and of iniquité,
 He for despyt, and for his tyrannye,
 To do the deede bodyes vilonye,

¹ Tyrwhitt's reading *to lyven*, by making 'victory' one foot, improves the metre, though it gives a redundant syllable. It seems impossible to scan the line as it here stands.

Of alle oure lordes, which that ben i-slawe,
 Hath alle the bodies on an heep y-drawe,
 And wol not suffren hem by noon assent
 Nother to ben y-buried nor y-brent,
 But maketh houndes ete hem in despite.
 And with that word, withoute more respite,
 They fillen gruf, and criden pitously,
 'Have on us wrecched wommen som mercy,
 And lat oure sorwe synken in thyn herte.'
 This gentil duke down from his courser sterte
 With herte pitous, whan he herde hem speke.
 Him thoughte that his herte wolde breke,
 Whan he seyh hem so piteous and so maat,
 That whilom weren of so gret estat.
 And in his armes he hem all up hente,
 And hem conforteth in ful good entente;
 And swor his oth, as he was trewe knight,
 He wolde do so ferforthly his might
 Upon the tyraunt Creon hem to wreke,
 That all the people of Grece scholde speke
 How Creon was of Theseus y-served,
 As he that hath his deth right wel deserved.
 And right anoon, withoute eny abood
 His baner he desplayeth,¹ and forth rood

¹ The displaying of the banner was the summons to the troops to assemble for military service. So when Charles I. formally displayed the royal standard, he intended by that act to assert his prerogative, denied by the Parliament, of calling out the militia, then the only military force of the kingdom. The following description of the banner or standard of Richard I. may serve to illustrate this passage. 'It was formed of a long beam, like the mast of a ship, made of most solid ceiled work, on four wheels, put together with joints, bound with iron, and to all appearance no sword or axe could cut, or fire injure it. A chosen body of soldiers were generally appointed to guard it, especially in a combat on the plains, lest by any hostile attack it should be broken or fall down; for if it fell by any accident, the army would be dispersed and put into confusion. For they are dismayed when it does not appear, and think that their general must be overcome by faint-heartedness when they do not see his standard flying. . . . Near it the weak are strengthened, the wounded soldiers, even those of rank and celebrity, who fall in the battle, are carried to it, and it is called the

To Thebes-ward, and al his oost bysyde;
 No ner Athenes wolde he go ne ryde,
 Ne take his eese fully half a day,
 But onward on his waye that nyght he lay;
 And sente anon Ypolita the queene,
 And Emelye hir yonge suster schene,
 Unto the toun of Athenes to dwelle;
 And forth he ryt; ther is no more to telle.

The reede statue of Mars with spere and targe
 So schyneth in his white baner large,
 That alle the feeldes¹ gliteren up and down;
 And by his baner was born his pynoun
 Of gold ful riche, in which ther was i-bete
 The Minatour which that he slough in Crete.
 Thus ryt this duk, thus ryt this conquerour,
 And in his oost of chevalrie the flour,
 Til that he cam to Thebes, and alighte
 Fayre in a feeld wher as he thoughte to fighte.
 But schortly for to speken of this thing,
 With Creon, which that was of Thebes kyng,
 He faught, and slough him manly as a knight
 In pleyn bataille, and putte his folk to flight;
 And by assaut he wan the cité aftur,
 And rente doun bothe wal, and sparre, and raftur;
 And to the ladies he restored agayn
 The bones of here housbondes that were slayn,
 To do exequies, as was tho the gyse.
 But it wer al to long for to devyse
 The grete clamour and the waymentynge
 Which that the ladies made at the brennynge

'standard,' from its standing a most compact signal to the army.'—*Itinerary of Richard I. and others to the Holy Land*, by GEOFFREY OF VINSANF.

¹ The *field* is the heraldic term for the ground upon which the various charges, as they are called, are emblazoned. The banner was large and broad, and upon it was emblazoned the knight's coat of arms. The pennon was small, forked, and usually bore his personal device or crest. The whole of this description is taken from the *Thebais*, lib. xii. The contrast, and at the same time, the similarity between the heroic and the chivalrous ideas is curious.

Of the bodyes, and the grete honour
 That Theseus the noble conquerour
 Doth to the ladyes, whan they from him wente.
 But schortly for to telle is myn entente.
 Whan that this worthy duk, this Theseus,
 Hath Creon slayn, and Thebes wonne thus,
 Stille in the feelde he took al night his reste,
 And dide with al the contré as him leste.

To ransake in the cas¹ of bodyes dede
 Hem for to streepe of herneys and of wede,
 The pilours diden businesse and cure,
 After the bataile and discomfiture.
 And so byfil, that in the cas thei founde,
 Thurgh girt with many a grevous bloody wounde,
 Two yonge knightes liggyng by and by,
 Both in oon² armes clad ful richely;
 Of whiche two, Arcite hight³ that oon,
 And that othur knight hight Palamon.
 Nat fully quyk, ne fully deed they were,
 But by here coote armure, and by here gere,
 Heraudes knewe hem wel in special,
 As they that weren of the blood real
 Of Thebes, and of sistren tuo i-born.
 Out of the chaas the pilours han hem torn,
 And han hem caried softe unto the tente
 Of Theseus, and ful sone he hem sente

¹ Instead of *cas* in this line, and *chaas* in the *Knights Tale*, Speght and Tyrwhitt read *taas*, meaning heap, as in modern French *tas*. Mr. Wright adopts the reading given in the text from the Harl. and other MSS., but does not attempt to explain it; nor indeed does it seem capable of a satisfactory explanation. [The right word is *tas*, which means a heap.—W.W.S.]

² Bearing the same coat of arms, which denoted that they belonged to the same house. Even in Homer there are indications of the idea of coat armour, but it was not until much later that particular coats were appropriated to families. This is, therefore, an anachronism, as is indeed the whole poem.

³ Preterite tense of the verb *to haten*, to be called. Tyrwhitt, in a note upon this word, says, 'It is difficult to determine what part of speech it is.' But it appears evidently to be a verb, of neuter form and passive signification, exactly analogous to the Latin *vapulo*, to be beaten. The modern German is *heissen*, with the same meaning.

Tathenes, for to dwellen in prisoun
 Perpetuelly, he wolde no raunceoun.
 And this duk whan he hadde thus i-doon,
 He took his host, and hom he ryt anoon
 With laurer crowned as a conquerour;
 And there he lyveth¹ in joye and in honour
 Terme of his lyf; what wolle ye wordes moo?
 And in a tour, in angwische and in woo,
 This Palamon, and his felawe Arcite,
 For evermo, ther may no gold hem quyte.
 This passeth yeer by yeer, and day by day,
 Till it fel oones in a morwe of May
 That Emelie, that fairer was to seene
 Than is the lilie on hire stalkes grene.
 And fresscher than the May with floures newe—
 For with the rose colour strof hire hewe,
 I not which was the fyner of hem two—
 Er it was day, as sche was wont to do,
 Sche was arisen, and al redy dight;
 For May wole have no sloggardye a night.
 The sesoun priketh every gentil herte,
 And maketh him out of his sleepe sterte,
 And seith, ‘Arys, and do thin observance.’
 This maked Emelye han remembrance
 To do honour to May,² and for to ryse.
 I-clothed was sche fressh for to devyse.

¹ He lyveth must be read as one foot; another instance of the rule so common in Latin and Greek metres, of considering two short unaccented syllables equivalent to one long.

² The return of genial weather in May has invested this month, in the customs of all nations, with something of a festive character.—See Ovid's *Fasti*, lib. v. The Roman Catholic devotion to the blessed Virgin in May, and our own Whitsuntide holidays, are indications of the same feeling. It was, until very lately, the custom in remote plaees for youths and maidens to go into the fields before sunrise, and bring home in gay procession boughs of trees, with which they decorated the church and their houses. The May-pole is not yet quite abandoned. Stubbs, in the *Anatomie of Abuses*, 1585, p. 94, says—‘Against Maie, every parishe, towne, and village, assembled themselves together, bothe men, women, and children, olde and younge, even all indifferently, and either going all together, or devidyng themselves into companies, they goe, some to

Hire yolwe heer was browdid in a tresse,
 Byhynde hire bak, a yerde long I gesse.
 And in the gardyn at the sonne upriste
 Sche walketh up and doun wher as hire liste.
 Sche gadereth floures, partye whyte and reede,
 To make a sotel¹ gerland for hire heede,
 And as an aungel hevenly sche song.
 The grete tour, that was so thikke and strong,
 Which of the castel was the cheef dongeoun,²
 (Ther as this knightes weren in prisoun,
 Of which I tolde yow, and telle schal)
 Was evene joynyng to the gardeyn wal,
 Ther as this Emely hadde hire pleyyng.
 Bright was the sonne, and cleer that morwenynge,
 And Palamon, this woful prisoner,
 As was his wone, by leve of his gayler
 Was risen,³ and romed in a chambre on heigh,
 In which he al the noble cite seigh,

the woodes and groves, some to the hills and mountaines, some to one place, some to another, where they spend all the night in pastimes, and in the morninge they return, bringing with them birche bowes and branches of trees to deck their assemblie withalle.'—See also *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act i., scene 1.

¹ The Harl. MS. reads *certeyn*, which seems unmeaning. Sotel is from Tyrwhitt, and signifies, of course, curiously or subtly braided. The twining of garlands of the young branches and flowers always formed a principal part of the May-day rites. In a ballad called the *Milkmaid's Life*, printed about 1630, we are told,—

'Upon the first of May,
 With garlands fresh and gay,
 With mirth and music sweet,
 For such a season meet,
 They passe their time away.'

The *dongeoun*, sometimes called the *donjon keep*, from *keep*, which meant guard. It was the principal guard of the castle, in consequence of its strength. Beneath the keep were the vaults in which prisoners were confined, whence the modern acceptance of the word *dungeon*.

³ *Was risen* must be considered as one foot for the sake of the metre, and the final *e* in *chambre* must be elided before the succeeding *on*.

And eek the gardeyn, ful of braunches grene,
 Ther as the fresshe Emelye the scheene¹
 Was in hire walk, and romed up and down.
 This sorweful prisoner, this Palamon,
 Gooth in the chambre romyng to and fro,
 And to himself compleynyng of his woo;
 That he was born, ful ofte he seyde, alas!
 And so byfel, by aventure or cas,
 That thurgh a wyndow thikke and many a barre
 Of iren greet and squar as eny sparre,
 He cast his eyen upon Emelya,
 And therwithal he bleynte and cryed, a!
 As that he stongen were unto the herte.
 And with that crye Arcite anon up sterte,
 And seyde, 'Cosyn myn, what eyleth the,
 That art so pale and deedly for to see?
 Why crydestow?'² who hath the doon offence?
 For Goddes love, tak al in pacience
 Oure prisoun, for it may non othir be;
 Fortune hath geven us this adversité.
 Som wikke aspect or disposicioun
 Of Saturne, by sum constellacioun,
 Hath geven us this, although we hadde it sworn;
 So stood the heven whan that we were born;
 We moste endure it: this is the schort and pleyn.'

This Palamon answered, and seyde ageyn,
 'Cosyn, for sothe of this opynyoun
 Thou hast a veyn ymaginacioun.
 This prisoun caused me not for to crye.
 But I was hurt right now thurgh myn yhe

¹ In the orthography of the MS. from which the text is derived, *sch*, as in modern German, has the same force as *sh*.

² *Crydestow?* for *criedst thou?* So *seistow* for *sayest thou*, *slepistow* for *sleepest thou*. It often happens that the difficulty of understanding old English depends entirely upon the orthography; when a passage therefore appears to be unintelligible, an excellent way, sometimes, of ascertaining the meaning is to read it aloud, and to be guided entirely by the sound, as in reading the *Fonetic Nuz*.

Into myn herte, that wol my bane be.
 The fairnesse of the lady that I see
 Yonde in the gardyn rome to and fro,
 Is cause of my crying and my wo.
 I not whethur sche be womman or goddesse;
 But Venus is it, sothly as I gesse.
 And therwithal on knees adoun he fil,
 And seyde: 'Venus, if it be youre wil
 Yow in this gardyn thus to transfigure,
 Biforn me sorwful wrecched creature,
 Out of this prisoun help that we may scape.
 And if so be oure destine be schape
 By eterne word to deyen in prisoun,
 Of oure lynage haveth sum compassioun,
 That is so lowe y-brought by tyrannye.'
 And with that word Arcite gan espye
 Wher as this lady romed to and fro.
 And with that sight hire Beaute hurt him so,
 That if that Palamon was wounded sore,
 Arcite is hurt as moche as he, or more.
 And with a sigh he seyde pitously:
 'The freissche Beaute sleeth me sodeynly
 Of hir that rometh yonder in the place;
 And but I have hir mercy and hir grace,
 That I may see hir atte leste weye,
 I nam but deed; ther nys no more to seye.
 This Palamon, whan he tho wordes herde,
 Dispitously he loked, and answerde:
 'Whether seistow in earnest or in pley?'
 'Nay,' quoth Arcite, 'in earnest in good fey.
 God helpe me so, me lust ful evele pleye.'
 This Palamon gan knytte his browes tweye:
 'It nere,' quod he, 'to the no gret honour,
 For to be fals, ne for to be traytour
 To me, that am thy cosyn and thy brother
 I-swore¹ ful deepe, and ech of us to other,

¹ Formal compacts for the purpose of mutual counsel and assist

That never for to deyen in the payne,¹
 Til that deeth departe schal us twayne,
 Neyther of us in love to hynder other,
 Ne in non other cas, my leeve brother;
 But that thou schuldest trewly forther me
 In every caas, and I schal forther the.
 This was thyn othe, and myn eek certayn;
 I wot right wel, thou darst it nat withsayn.
 Thus art thou of my counseil out of doute.
 And now thou woldest falsly ben aboute
 To love my lady, whom I love and serve,
 And evere schal, unto myn herte sterve.
 Now certes, fals Arcite, thou schal not so.
 I loved hir first, and tolde the my woo
 As to my counseil, and to brother sworn
 To forther me, as I have told biforn.
 For which thou art i-bounden as a knight
 To helpe me, if it lay in thi might,
 Or elles art thou fals, I dar wel sayn.'
 This Arcite ful proudly spak agayn.
 'Thou schalt,' quoth he, 'be rather fals than I.
 But thou art fals, I telle the uttirly.

ance in love and war were common to the heroic and chivalrous ages. Theseus and Peirithous, Achilles and Patroclus, Pylades and Orestes, Nysus and Euryalus, and, in the *Thebais*, Tydeus and Polynices, are instances familiar to every one, in the former period; in the latter, examples may be found in innumerable romances. Authentic history furnishes many similar cases, of which we have an interesting illustration in a book entitled *Ancient Irish Histories*, in which are narrated the adventures of Sir John de Courcy and Sir Armoric de St. Lawrence. Norman knights, and ancestors of the present Lords Kinsale and Howth, to whom Henry II. had granted districts in Ireland, and who, in virtue of a compact of this sort, rendered each other valuable assistance in their continual wars with the wild Irish or kerns.

¹ A translation of a French expression. Froissart, quoted by Tyrwhitt, relates, that Edward III. declared he would not return 'jusques à tant qu'il auroit fin de guerre, ou paix à sa suffisance, ou à son grand honneur; ou il mourroit en la peine.'—See also *Romance of the Rose*, vol. iv. p. 116.

'All that ye saine is but in vaine,
 Me were lever die in the paine.'

For *par amour*¹ I loved hir first then thou.
 What wolt thou sayn? thou wost not yit now
 Whether sche be a womman or goddesse.
 Thyn is affeccoun of holynesse,
 And myn is love, as of a creature;
 For which I tolde the myn aventure
 As to my cosyn, and my brother sworn.
 I pose,² that thou lovedest hire biforn;
 Wost thou nat wel the olde clerkes³ sawe,
 That who schal geve a lover eny lawe,
 Love is a grettere lawe, by my pan,⁴
 Then may be geve to eny erthly man?
 Therfore posityf lawe, and such decre,
 Is broke alway for love in ech degree.
 A man moot needes love maugre his heed.
 He may nought fle it, though he schulde be deed,
 Al be sche mayde, or be sche widewe or wyf.
 And that it is nat likly al thy lyf
 To stonden in hire grace, no more schal I;
 For wel thou wost thyselfen verrily,
 That thou and I been dampned to prisoun
 Perpetuelly, us gayneth no raunsoun.
 We stryve, as doth the houndes for the boon,
 They foughte al day, and yit here part was noon
 Ther com a kyte, whil that they were wrothe,
 And bar away the boon bitwixe hem bothe.
 And therfore at the kynges court, my brother,
 Eche man for himself, ther is non other.
 Love if the list; for I love and ay schal;
 And sothly, leeve brother, this is al.

¹ In the way of love. You loved her as a matter of religion, supposing her to be the goddess Venus. The expression to love, *par amour*, was also used in contradistinction to chaste love; hence the modern substantive paramour.

² *Je pose*, I put it, that is, I suppose, for the sake of argument.

³ The 'clerke' is Boethius, and the proverb is taken from his *De Consolatione*, lib. iii. met. 12:—

'Quis legem det amantibus?
 Major lex amor est sibi.'

⁴ By my pan means brain-pan or skull.

Eke in this prisoun moote we endure,
 And every of us take his aventure.¹
 Gret was the stryf and long bytwixe hem tweye.
 If that I hadde leysir for to seye;
 But to the effect. It happed on a day,
 (To telle it yow as schortly as I may)
 A worthy duk that highte Perotheus,
 That felaw¹ was to the duk Theseus
 Syn thilke day that they were children lyte,
 Was come to Athenes, his felawe to visite,
 And for to pley, as he was wont to do,
 For in this world he loved noman so:
 And he loved him as tendurly agayn.
 So wel they loved, as olde bookes sayn,
 That whan that oon was deed, sothly to telle,
 His felawe went and sought him doun in helle;²
 But of that story lyst me nought to write.
 Duk Perotheus loved wel Arcite,
 And hadde him knowe at Thebes yeer by yeer;
 And fynally at requeste and prayer
 Of Perotheus, withoute any raunsoun
 Duk Theseus him leet out of prisoun,
 Frely to go, wher him lust over al,
 In such a gyse, as I you telle schal.
 This was the forward, playnly to endite,
 Betwixe Theseus and him Arcite:
 That if so were, that Arcite were founde
 Evere in his lyf, by daye or night, o stound
 In eny contre of this Theseus,
 And he were caught, it was acorded thus,

¹ Brother in arms. See *ante* p. 124, note 1. 'Theseus did not only release him (Peirithous) of all the damage he had done, but requested him he would become his friend and brother in arms. Hereupon they were presently sworn brothers in the field.'—PLUTARCH, *Lives*, translated by Sir Thomas North, Knight, 1631.

² An allusion to Theseus accompanying Peirithous in his expedition to carry off Proserpina, daughter of Aidoneus, king of the Molossians, when both were taken prisoners, and Peirithous torn in pieces by the dog Cerberus.—PLUTARCH, *Theseus*.

That with a swerd he scholde lese his heed;
 Ther nas noon other remedy ne reed,
 But took his leeve, and homward he him spedde;
 Let him be war, his nekke lith to wedde.¹

How gret a sorwe suffreth now Arcite!
 The deth he feleth thorough his herte smyte;
 He weepeth, weyleth, cryeth pitously;
 To slen himself he wayteth pryvyly.
 He seyde, 'Allas the day that I was born!
 Now is my prisoun werse than was biforne;
 Now is me schape eternally to dwelle
 Nought in purgatorie, but in helle.²
 Allas! that ever knewe I Perotheus!
 For elles had I dweld with Theseus
 I-fetered in his prisoun for evere moo.
 Than had I ben in blis, and nat in woo.
 Oonly the sight of hir, whom that I serve,
 Though that I hir grace may nat deserve,
 Wold han sufficed right ynough for me.
 O dere cosyn Palamon,' quod he,
 'Thyn is the victoire of this aventure,
 Ful blisfully in prisoun to endure;
 In prisoun? nay, certes but in paradys!
 Wel hath fortune y-torned the the dys,
 That hath the sight of hir, and I the absence.
 For possible is, syn thou hast hir presence,
 And art a knight, a worthi and an able,
 That by som cas, syn fortune is chaungable,
 Thou maist to thy desir somtyme atteyne.
 But I that am exiled, and bareyne
 Of alle grace, and in so gret despeir,
 That ther nys water, erthe, fyr, ne eyr,
 Ne creature, that of hem maked is.
 That may me helpe ne comfort in this.
 Wel ought I sterve in wanhope and distresse;
 Farwel my lyf and al my jolynesse.

¹ Lies in pledge. *Wad* is still used provincially in this sense.

² In purgatory there is hope of redemption; not so in hell.

Allas, why playnen folk so in comune
 Of purveance of God, or of fortune,
 That geveth hem ful ofte in many a gyse
 Wel better than thei can hemself devyse?
 Som man desireth for to have richesse,
 That cause is of his morthre or gret seeknesse.
 And som man wolde out of his prisoun fayn,
 That in his hous is of his mayne slayn.
 Infinite harmes ben in this mateere;
 We wote nevere what thing we prayen heere.
 We faren as he that dronke is as a mows.
 A dronke man wot wel he hath an hous,¹
 But he not nat which the righte wey is thider,
 And to a dronke man the wey is slider,
 And certes in this world so faren we.
 We seeken faste after felicite,
 But we gon wrong ful ofte trewely.
 Thus may we seyen alle, namely I,
 That wende have had a gret opinioun,
 That gif I mighte skape fro prisoun,
 Than had I be in joye and parfyt hele,
 Ther now I am exiled fro my wele.
 Syn that I may not se yow, Emelye,
 I nam but deed; ther nys no remedye.'

Uppon that other syde Palamon,
 Whan he wiste that Arcite was agoon,
 Such sorwe maketh, that the grete tour
 Resowneth of his yollyng and clamour.
 The pure² feteres of his schynes grete
 Weren of his bitter salte teres wete.
 'Allas!' quod he, 'Arcita, cosyn myn,
 Of al oure strif, God woot, the fruyt is thin.

¹ This is also from Boethius, *De Consolatione*, lib. iii., thus translated by Chaucer. 'But I returne again to the studies of men, of which men the corage alway reherseth and seeketh the soveraine good, al be it so that it be with a dyrked memory; but he not by which pathe, *right as a dronken man note nought by which pathe he may returne home to his house.*'

² The very fetters. So in the *Duchess*, vol. ii. p. 404, the 'pure deth.' And in *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*, l. 217, 'of a pure pore man.'

Thow walkest now in Thebes at thi large,
And of my woo thou gevest litel charge.
Thou maiste, syn thou hast wysdom and manhede,
Assemble al the folk of oure kynrede,
And make a werre so scharpe in this cité,
That by som aventure, or by som treté,
Thou mayst hire wynne to lady and to wyf,
For whom that I most needes leese my lyf.
For as by wey of possibilité,
Syn thou art at thi large of prisoun free,
And art a lord, gret is thin advantage,
More than is myn, that sterve here in a kage.
For I moot weepe and weyle, whil I lyve,
With al the woo that prisoun may me gyve,
And eek with peyne that love me geveth also,
That doubleth al my torment and my wo.
Therwith the fuyr of jelousye upsterte
Withinne his brest, and hent him by the herte
So wodly, that lik was he to byholde
The box-tree, or the asschen deed and colde.
Tho seyde he ; ‘ O goddes cruel, that governe
This world with byndyng of youre word eterne,
And writen in the table of athamaunte
Your parlement and youre eterne graunte,
What is mankynde more to yow holde
Than is a scheep, that rouketh in the folde ?
For slayn is man right as another beste,
And dwelleth eek in prisoun and arreste,
And hath seknesse, and greet adversité,
And ofte tymes gilteles, pardé.
What governaunce is in youre prescience,
That gilteles tormenteth innocence ?
And yet encreceth this al my penaunce,
That man is bounden to his observaunce
For Goddes sake to letten of his wille,
Ther as a beste may al his lust fulfille.
And whan a beste is deed, he ne hath no peyne ;
But man after his deth moot wepe and pleyne,

Though in this world he have care and woo :
 Withouten doute it may stonde so.
 The answer of this I lete to divinis,
 But well I woot, that in this world gret pyne is.
 Allas ! I se a serpent or a theef,
 That many a trewe man hath doon mescheef,
 Gon at his large, and wher him lust may turne.
 But I moste be in prisoun thurgh Saturne,
 And eek thorough Juno, jealous¹ and eke wood,
 That hath destroyed wel neyh al the blood
 Of Thebes, with his waste walles wyde.
 And Venus sleeth me on that other syde
 For jelousye, and fere of him Arcyte.'

Now wol I stynte of Palamon a lite,
 And lete him stille in his prisoun dwelle,
 And of Arcita forth than wol I telle.
 The somer passeth, and the nightes longe
 Encrescen double wise the peynes stronge
 Bothe of the lover and the prisoner.
 I noot which hath the wofullere cheer.
 For schortly for to sey, this Palamon
 Perpetuelly is dampned to prisoun,
 In cheynes and in feteres to be deed ;
 And Arcite is exiled upon his heed
 For evere mo as out of that contré,
 Ne nevere mo he schal his lady see.
 Now lovyeres axe I this question,²
 Who hath the worse, Arcite or Palamon ?
 That on may se his lady day by day,
 But in prisoun he moot dwelle alway.
 That other may wher him lust ryde or go,
 But seen his lady schal he never mo.

¹ Jealous, because of Jupiter's love of Semele, daughter of Cadmus, founder of Thebes, and of the devotion of the Thebans to Bacchus, the fruit of the amour.

² Mr. Wright, in a note upon the place, says, that this is an allusion to the mediæval Courts of Love, in which such questions were seriously discussed.

Now deemeth as you luste, ye that can,
For I wol telle forth as I bigan.

Whan that Arcite to Thebes come was,
Ful ofte a day he swelde and seyde alas,
For seen his lady schal he never mo.
And schortly to concluden all his wo,
So moche sorwe had never creature,
That is or schal whil that the world wol duve.
His sleep, his mete, his drynk is him byraft,
That lene he wexe, and drye as eny schaft.
His eyen holwe, grisly to biholde ;
His hewe falwe, and pale as asschen colde,
And solitary he was, and ever alone,
And dwellyng all the night, making his moone.
And if he herde song or instrument,
Then wolde he wepe, he mighte nought be stent ;
So feble were his spirites, and so lowe.
And chaunged so, that no man couthe knowe
His speche nother his vois, though men it herde.
And in his gir,¹ for all the world he ferde
Nought oonly lyke the lovers maladye
Of Hereos,² but rather lik manye,
Engendrud of humour melencolyk,
Byforne in his selle fantastyk.³

¹ In his manner he appeared not like an ordinary lover, but like a madman, whose brain is disordered by bile.

² 'Whereas some copies have *Hercos*, some *Hermes*, and some such like counterfeit word, whereof can be given no reason, I have set down *Eros*, i. e., Cupid, as most agreeing, in my opinion, with the matter, which I gather thus. Lucian, in his second dialogue, bringeth in Cupid teaching Jupiter how to become amiable, and in him how lovers may become acceptable to their ladies; not by weeping, watching, and fasting, nor by furious melancolicke fits, but by comely behaviour.'—S. It is thus rendered by Dryden :—

'Unlike the trim of love and gay desire;
But full of museful mopings,—'

[*Ereos*, or *Hereos*, is a false genitive of Gk. *ἔρως*, love, or 'Cupid.'—W. W. S.]

³ In the forehead, where is situated the cell of the brain in which the fancy resides. So it appears that Dr. Spurzheim might appeal, in support of his 'science of phrenology,' to the natural philosophy of the middle ages.

And schortly turned was al up-so-doun
 Bothe abytt and eek disposicioun
 Of him, this woful love-re daun Arcite.
 What schulde I alway of his wo endite?
 Whan he endured hadde a yeer or tuoo
 This cruel torment, and this peyne and woo,
 At Thebes, in his contre, as I seyde,
 Upon a night in sleep as he him leyde,
 Him thought that how the wenged god Mercurie
 Byforn him stood, and bad him be murie.
 His slepy yerd¹ in hond he bar upright;
 An hat he wered upon his heres bright.
 Arrayed was this god (as he took keepe)
 As he was whan that Argous² took his sleep;
 And seyde him thus: 'To Athenes schalt thou wende;
 Ther is the schapen of thy wo an ende.'³
 And with that word Arcite wook and sterte.
 'Now trewely how sore that me smerte.'
 Quod he, 'to Athenes right now wol I fare;
 Ne for the drede of deth schal I not spare
 To see my lady, that I love and serve;
 In hire presence I recche nat to sterve.'
 And with that word he caught a gret myrour,
 And saugh that chaunged was al his colour,
 And saugh his visage was in another kynde.
 And right anon it ran him into mynde.
 That seththen his face was so disfigured
 Of maladie the which he hath endured,
 He mighte wel, if that he bar him lowe,
 Lyve in Athenes evere more unknowe,
 And see his lady wel neih day by day.
 And right anon he chaunged his aray,
 And clothed him as a pore laborer.
 And al alone, save oonly a squyer,

¹ The Caduceus.

² See Ovid's *Metamorph.*, lib. i., line 714.

³ Where an end of thy woe is shaped, or contrived, for thee.

That knew his pryvyte and al his cas,
 Which was disgysed povrely as he was,
 To Athenes is he go the nexte way.
 And to the court he went upon a day,
 And at the gate he profred his servyse,
 To drugge and drawe, what so men wolde devysa
 And schortly of this matier for to seyn,
 He fel in office with a chambirleyn,
 The which that dwellyng was with Emelye.
 For he was wys, and couthe sone aspye¹
 Of every servaunt, which that served here.
 Wel couthe he hewe woode, and water bere,
 For he was yonge and mighty for the nones,
 And therto he was strong and bygge of bones
 To doon that eny wight can him devyse.
 A yeer or two he was in this servise,
 Page of the chambre of Emelye the bright;
 And Philostrate² he seide that he hight.
 But half so wel beloved a man as he
 Ne was ther never in court of his degree.
 He was so gentil of his condicioun,
 That thoroughout al the court was his renoun.
 They seyde that it were a charité
 That Theseus would enhaunsen his degree,
 And putten him in worschipful servyse,
 Ther as he might his vertu excersise.
 And thus within a while his name spronge³
 Bothe of his dedes, and of goode tonge,
 That Theseus hath taken him so neer
 That of his chambre he made him squyer,

¹ This appears to mean—he knew how to watch, or espy, opportunities of recommending himself to his master, sooner than any servant in the family.

² Tyrwhitt says, that in the *Theseida*, Arcite assumes the name of *Penthæo*, and conjectures that the name of Philostrate was suggested by Boccaccio's poem, entitled *Philistrato*, or by one of the characters in the *Decameron*. In the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, a Philostrate is also introduced as a favourite servant of Theseus.

³ His good name began to spring up; a beautiful metaphor from the growth of plants.

And gaf him gold to mayntene his degree ;
 And eek men brought him out of his countré
 Fro yeer to yer ful pryvyly his rente ;
 But honestly and sleighly he it spente,
 That no man wondred how that he it hadde.
 And thre yeer in this wise his lyf he ladde,
 And bar him so in pees and eek in werre,
 Ther nas no man that Theseus hath so derre.
 And in this blisse lete I now Arcite,
 And speke I wole of Palamon a lyte.

In derknes horrible and strong prisoun
 This seven yeer hath seten Palamon,
 Forpyned, what for woo and for destresse,
 Who feleth double sorwe and hevynesse
 But Palamon ? that love destreyneth so,
 That wood out of his witt he goth for wo ;
 And eek therto he is a prisoner
 Perpetuelly, nat oonly for a yeer.
 Who couthe ryme in Englissch properly
 His martirdam ? for sothe it am nat I ;
 Therefore I passe as lightly as I may.
 It fel that in the seventhe yeer in May
 The thridde night, (as olde bookes seyn,
 That al this storie tellen more pleyn)
 Were it by aventure or destené,
 (As, whan a thing is schapen, it schal be,)
 That soone aftur the mydnyght, Palamon
 By helpyng of a freend brak his prisoun,
 And fleeth the cite fast as he may goo,
 For he hath give drinke his gayler soo
 Of a clarre,¹ maad of a certayn wyn,
 With nercotykes and opye of Thebes fyn,
 That al that night though that men wolde him schake,
 The gayler sleep, he mighte nought awake.

¹ Spiced wine, given to guests the last thing before going to bed, to promote sleep. The red wine of Bordeaux, being generally used for this purpose, at length obtained exclusive possession of the name of *claret*.

And thus he fleeth as fast as ever he may.
 The night was schort, and faste by the day,
 That needes cost¹ he moste himselven hyde,
 And til a grove ther faste besyde
 With dredful foot than stalketh Palamon.
 For schortly this was his opynyoun,
 That in that grove he wolde him hyde al day,
 And in the night then wolde he take his way
 To Thebes-ward, his frendes for to preye
 On Theseus to helpe him to werreye.
 And schortelich, or he wolde lese his lyf,
 Or wynnen Emelye unto his wyf.
 This is theeffect of his entente playn.
 Now wol I torne unto Arcite agayn,
 That litel wiste how nyh that was his care,
 Til that fortune hath brought him in the snare.

The busy larke, messenger of daye,
 Salueth in hire song the morwe gray;
 And fyry Phebus ryseth up so bright,
 That all the orient laugheth of the light,
 And with his stremes dryeth in the greves
 The silver dropes, hongyng on the leeves.
 And Arcite, that is in the court ryal
 With Theseus, his squyer principal,
 Is risen, and loketh on the mery day.
 And for to doon his observance to May,²
 Remembryng of the poynt of his desire,
 He on his courser, stertyng as the fire,
 Is riden into feeldes him to pleye,
 Out of the court, were it a myle or tweye.
 And to the grove, of which that I yow tolde,
 By aventure his wey he gan to holde,
 To make him a garland of the greves,
 Were it of woodewynde or hawthorn leves,

¹ Apparently a proverbial expression of the same signification as *needs must*. It occurs in the *Leg. of Gode Women*:—

‘Or, needes coste, this thing mote have an end.’

² See *ante*, p. 121, note 2.

And lowde he song agens the sonne scheene :
 'May, with all thyu floures and thy greene,
 Welcome be thou, wel faire freissche May,
 I hope that I som grene gete may.'¹
 And fro his courser, with a lusty herte,
 Into the grove ful lustily he sterte,
 And in a pathe he romed up and down,
 Ther by aventure this Palamoun
 Was in a busche, that no man might him see.
 Ful sore afered of his deth was he,
 Nothing ne knew he that it was Arcite :
 God wot he wolde have trowed it ful lite.
 For soth is seyde, goon ful many yeres,
 That feld hath eyen, and the woode hath eeres.²
 It is ful fair a man to bere him evene,
 For al day meteth men atte unset stevene.³
 Ful litel woot Arcite of his felawe,
 That was so neih to herken of his sawe,
 For in the busche he stynteth now ful stille.
 Whan that Arcite had romed al his fille,
 And songen al the roundel lustily,
 Into a studie he fel sodeynly,
 As doth thes lovers in here queynte geeres,
 Now in the crophe, now down in the breres,⁴
 Now up, now down, as boket in a welle.
 Right as the Friday, sothly for to telle,
 Now it schyneth, now it reyneth faste,
 Right so gan gery Venus overcaste
 The hertes of hire folk, right as hir day⁵
 Is geful, right so chaungeth hire aray.

¹ This is a singularly bald conclusion to his song, for which, and for the two following lines, the only excuse is Horace's 'Bonus dormitat Homerus.'

² A proverbial expression, rendered into mediæval Latin. 'Campus habet lumen, et habet nemus auris acumen.'

³ It is right that men bear themselves warily at all times, for it happens every day that they meet when they least expect it, without making an appointment.

⁴ *Now in the crophe*, now at the top of the wood, in high spirits; *now in the breres*, now low on the ground among the briars, depressed.

⁵ Friday, sacred to the Saxon goddess Friga, corresponding to the

Selde is the Fryday al the wyke i-like.
 Whan that Arcite hadde songe, he gan to sike,
 And sette him donn withouten eny more:
 'Alas!' quod he, 'that day that I was bore!
 How longe Juno,¹ thurgh thy cruelté
 Wiltow werreyen Thebes the citee?
 Allas! i-brought is to confusioun
 The blood royal of Cadme and Amphioun;
 Of Cadynus, the which was the furst man
 That Thebes bulde, or first the toun bygan,
 And of that eite first was erowned kyng,
 Of his lynage am I, and his ofspring
 By verray lyne, and of his stok ryal:
 And now I am so caytyf and so thral,
 That he that is my mortal enemy,
 I serve him as his squyer povrely.
 And yet doth Juno me wel more schame,
 For I dar nought byknowe myn owne name,
 But ther as I was wont to hote Arcite,
 Now hoote I Philostrate, nought worth a myte.
 Allas! thou felle Mars, allas! Juno,
 Thus hath youre ire owre lynage fordo,
 Save oonly me, and wreechid Palamon,
 That Theseus martyreth in prisoun.
 And over all this, to slee me utterly,
 Love hath his fyry dart so brennyngly
 I-stykid thorough my trewe careful herte,
 That schapen was my deth erst than my scherte.²

classical Aphrodite or Venus. The superstitious opinion that Friday is unlucky appears to have had a Christian origin, being the day on which the Redeemer was crucified. The proverb, 'Friday's moon, come when it will, it comes too soon,' is an instance of this feeling. In the next line *gerful*, meaning changeable, which is the reading of the two Cambridge MSS., has been adopted, instead of *grisful*.

¹ See *ante*, p. 131, note 1.

² My death was doomed from the moment I was born, even before I was clothed. Tyrwhitt says, it seems to mean the linen in which a new-born babe is wrapped. Compare *Leg. of Gode Women*, vol. iii. p. 398:—

'Sens first that day that shapen was my sherte,
 Or by the fatal suster had my dome.'

Ye slen me with youre eyhen, Emelye ;
 Ye ben the cause wherfore that I dye.
 Of al the remenant of al myn other care
 Ne sette I nought the mountaunce of a tare,
 So that I couthe do ought to youre plesaunce.¹
 And with that word he fel down in a traunce
 A longe tyme ; and aftirward upsterte
 This Palamon, that thoughte thurgh his herte
 He felt a cold swerd sodeynliche glyde ;
 For ire he quook, he nolde no lenger abyde.
 And whan that he hath herd Arcites tale,
 As he were wood, with face deed and pale,
 He sterte him up out of the bussches thikke,
 And seyde : ‘ Arcyte, false traitour wikke,
 Now art thou hent, that lovest my lady so,
 For whom that I have al this peyne and wo,
 And art my blood, and to my counseil sworn,
 As I ful ofte have told the heere byforn,
 And hast byjaped here the duke Theseus,
 And falsly chaunged hast thy name thus ;
 I wol be deed, or elles thou schalt dye.
 Thou schalt not love my lady Emelye,
 But I wil love hire oonly and no mo ;
 For I am Palamon thy mortal fo.
 And though that I no wepen have in this place,
 But out of prisoun am y-stert by grace,
 I drede not that other thou schalt dye,
 Or thou ne schalt not love Emelye.
 Chese which thou wilt, for thou schalt not asterte.’
 This Arcite, with ful despitous herte,
 Whan he him knew, and had his tale herde,
 As fers as a lyoun pulleth out a swerde,
 And seide thus : ‘ By God that sitteth above,
 Nere it that thou art sike and wood for love,
 And eek that thou no wepne hast in this place,
 Thou schuldest never out of this grove pace,¹

¹ The Harl. MS. reads, *But out of prison art y-stert by grace*, which probably arose from a mistake of the scribe, who, seeing that the pre-

That thou ne schuldest deyen of myn hond.
 For I defye the seurte and the bond
 Which that thou seyst I have maad to the.
 For, verray fool, thenk that love is fre;
 And I wol love hire mawgre al thy might.
 But, for thou art a gentil perfight knight,
 And wenest to dereyne hire by batayle,
 Have heere my trouthe, to morwe I nyl not fayle,
 Withouten wityng of eny other wight,
 That heer I wol be founden as a knight,
 And bryngen harneys right inough for the;
 And ches the best, and lef the worst for me.
 And mete and drynke this night wil I bryng
 Inough for the, and cloth for thy beddyng.
 And if so be that thou my lady wyne,
 And sle me in this wood that I am inne,
 Thou maist wel have thy lady as for me.
 This Palamon answereth, 'I graunt it the.'
 And thus they ben departed til a-morwe,
 Whan ech of hem had leyd his feith to borwe.

O Cupide, out of al charité!

O regne, that wolt no felaw have with the!
 Ful soth is seyde, that love ne lordschipe
 Wol not, his thonkes,¹ have no felaschipe.
 Wel fynden that Arcite and Palamoun.
 Arcite is riden anon to the toun,
 And on the morwe, or it were day light,
 Ful prively two harneys hath he dight,
 Bothe sufficaunt and mete to darreyne
 The batayl in the feeld betwix hem tweyne.
 And on his hors, alone as he was born,
 He caryed al this harneys him byfor;
 And in the grove, at tyme and place i-sette,
 This Arcite and this Palamon ben mette.

vious line was a repetition of one that had occurred just before, thought that the next line was to be repeated also.—W.

¹ With his good will. In other passages, *hir thanks*; with their good will. So, observes Tyrwhitt, in the *Sax. Chron.* p. 243:—'Sume *here thanks*, and sume *here unthanked*; aliqui *libenter*, et aliqui *ingratis*.

Tho chaungen gan here colour in here face.
 Right as the honter in the regne of Trace¹
 That stondeþ in the gappe with a spere,
 Whan honted is the lyoun or the bere,
 And hereth him come russhyng in the greves,
 And breketh bothe the bowes and the leves,
 And thenketh, ' Here cometh my mortel enemy,
 Withoute faile, he mot be deed or I;
 For eyther I mot slen him at the gappe,
 Or he moot slee me, if it me myshappe :'
 So ferden they, in chaungyng of here hew,
 As fer as eyther of hem other knewe.
 Ther nas no good day, ne no saluyng ;
 But streyt withouten wordes rehersyng,
 Every of hem helpeth to armen other,
 As frendly as he were his owen brother ;
 And thanne with here scharpe speres stronge
 They foyneden ech at other wonder longe.
 Tho it semed that this Palamon
 In his fightyng were as a wood lyoun,
 And as a cruel tygre was Arcite :
 As wilde boores gonne they togeder smyte,
 That frothen white as fome for ire wood.
 Up to the ancle they faught in here blood.
 And in this wise I lete hem fightyng welle ;
 And forthere I wol of Theseus telle.

The destine, mynistre general,
 That executeth in the world over al
 The purveans, that God hath seye byforn ;
 So strong it is, that they² the world had sworn

¹ This fine simile appears to have been taken from the *Thebais*, lib. iv., 424. The passage is given, that the reader may see how Chaucer has excelled the Latin poet:—

' Qualis Gætulæ stabulantem ad confraga sylvæ
 Venator longo motum clamore leonem
 Expectat, firmans animum, et sudantia nisu
 Tela premens. Gelat ora pavor, gressusque tremiscunt,
 Quis veniat, quantusque ; sed horrida signa prementis
 Accipit, et cæcâ metitur murmura curâ.'

² *They* is written for *though*. Sir Harris Nicolas cites this passage

The contrary of a thing by ye or nay,
 Yet som tyme it schal falle upon a day
 That falleth nought eft in a thousand yeere.
 For certeynly oure appetites heere,
 Be it of werre, of pees, other hate, or love,
 Al is it reuled by the sight above.
 This mene I now by mighty Theseus,
 That for to honte is so desirous,
 And namely the grete hert in May,
 That in his bed ther daweth him no day,
 That he nys clad, and redy for to ryde
 With hont and horn, and houndes him byside.
 For in his hontyng hath he such delyt,
 That is his joye and his appetyt
 To been himself the grete herts bane,
 For after Mars he serveth now Diane.

Cleer was the day, as I have told or this,
 And Theseus, with alle joye and blys,
 With his Ypolita, the fayre queene,
 And Emelye, clothed al in greene,
 On honting be they riden ryally.
 And to the grove, that stood ther faste by,
 In which ther was an hert as men him tolde,
 Duk Theseus the streyte wey hath holde.
 And to the launde he rydeth him ful right,
 There was the hert y-wont to have his flight,
 And over a brook, and so forth in his weye.
 This duk wol have of him a cours or tweye
 With houndes, which as him lust to comaunde.
 And whan this duk was come into the launde,
 Under the sonne he loketh,¹ right anon
 He was war of Arcite and Palamon,

as a proof of Chaucer's belief in predestination, meaning, apparently, the doctrine of absolute decrees. It proves his belief in God's providential government of the world, which is a very different thing.

¹ This passage is an example of Chaucer's power of description. We think we must have actually witnessed the scene. Theseus rides into the forest glade, or lawn, in which Palamon and Arcite are fighting; then, seeing and hearing something unusual, but indistinctly, he shades

That foughten breeme, as it were boores tuo;
 The brighte swerdes wente to and fro
 So hidously, that with the leste strook
 It seemeth as it wolde felle an ook;
 But what they were, nothing yit he woot.
 This duk with spores his courser he smoot,
 And at a stert he was betwixt hem tuoo,
 And pullid out a swerd and cride, 'Hoo!'¹
 Nomore, up peyne of leesyng of your heed.
 By mighty Mars, anon he schal be deed,
 That smyteth eny strook, that I may seen!
 But telleth me what mestir men ye been,
 That ben so hardy for to fighten heere
 Withoute jugge or other officere,²
 As it were in a lyste really?'
 This Palamon answerde hastily,
 And seyde: 'Sire, what nedeth wordes mo?
 We han the deth deserved bothe tuo.
 Tuo woful wrecches been we, and kaytyves,
 That ben encombred of oure owne lyves;
 And as thou art a rightful lord and juge,
 Ne geve us neyther mercy ne refuge.
 And sle me first, for seynte charité;
 But sle my felaw eek as wel as me.
 Or sle him first; for, though thou knowe him lyte,
 This is thy mortal fo, this is Arcite,
 That fro thy lond is banyscht on his heed,
 For which he hath i-served³ to be deed.

his eyes with his hand from the glare of the sun, and, becoming aware of the state of the case, he puts spurs to his horse, and dashes in between the combatants.

¹ The exclamation used by the heralds to stop the fight.—See *post*, p. 170, note 1.

² The trial by battle, being a legal mode of settling a dispute between gentlemen, and to be conducted by a proper judge and officer, it was, of course, considered an offence and high contempt of the laws to fight without observing these formalities.

³ For *i-served*, Spcght and Tyrwhitt read *deserved*. The sense is the same in both cases.

For this is he that come to thi gate
 And seyde, that he highte Philostrate.
 Thus hath he japed the many a yer,
 And thou hast maad of him thy cheef squyer.
 And this is he that loveth Emelye.
 For sith the day is come that I schal dye,
 I make pleylnly my confessioun,
 That I am the woful Palamoun,
 That hath thy prisoun broke wikkedly.
 I am thy mortal foo, and it am I
 That loveth so hoote Emely the bright,
 That I wol dye present in hire sight.
 Therfore I aske deeth and my juwyse;
 But slee my felaw in the same wyse,
 For bothe we have served to be slayn.'

This worthy duk answerde anon agayn,
 And seide, 'This is a schort conclusioun:
 Your owne mouth, by your owne confessioun,
 Hath dampned you bothe, and I wil it recorde.
 It nedeth nought to pyne yow with the corde.
 Ye schul be deed by mighty Mars the reede!'¹
 The queen anon for verray wommanhede
 Gan for to wepe, and so dede Emelye,
 And alle the ladies in the companye.
 Gret pite was it, as it thought hem alle,
 That evere such a chaunce schulde falle;
 For gentil men thi were and of gret estate,
 And nothing but for love was this debate.
 And saw here bloody woundes wyde and sore;
 And alle they cryde lesse and the more,
 'Have mercy, Lord, upon us women alle!
 And on here bare knees anoon they falle,
 And wolde have kissed his feet right as he stood,
 Til atte laste aslaked was his mood;

¹ Mars is called red from the colour of blood, in which he is supposed to delight. The planet remarkable for its redness was called Mars on account of its colour.

For pite renneth sone in gentil herte.
 And though he first for ire quok and sterte,
 He hath it al considered in a clause,
 The trespas of hem bothe, and here cause :
 And although his ire here gylt accused,
 Yet in his resoun he hem bothe excused ;
 And thus he thought that every maner man
 Wol help himself in love if that he can,
 And eek delyver himself out of prisoun.
 And eek in his hert had compassioun
 Of wommen, for they wepen ever in oon ;
 And in his gentil hert he thought anoon,
 And sothly he to himself seyde : ‘ Fy
 Upon a lord that wol have no mercy,
 But be a lyoun bothe in word and dede,
 To hem that ben in repentaunce and drede,
 As wel as to a proud dispitious man,
 That wol maynteyne that he first bigan.
 That lord hath litel of discrecioun,
 That in such caas can no divisoun ;
 But wayeth pride and humblenesse after oon,
 And schortly, whan his ire is over gon,
 He gan to loke on hem with eyen light,¹
 And spak these same wordes al in hight.
 ‘ The god of love, a ! *benedicite*,²
 How mighty and how gret a lord is he !
 Agayne his might ther gayneth non obstacle,
 He may be cleped a god of his miracle ;
 For he can maken at his owen gyse
 Of ever herte, as him lust devyse.
 Lo her is Arcite and Palamon,
 That quyately were out of my prisoun,
 And might have lyved in Thebes ryally,
 And witen I am here mortal enemy,

¹ Cheerful looks.

² *Benedicite* is the first word of the *Song of the Three Children* in the old offices said at Lauds, and in the book of Common Prayer at morning service, and is commonly used to expresse admiration.

And that here deth lith in my might also,
 And yet hath love, maugre here eyghen tuo,
 I-brought hem hider bothe for to dye.
 Now loketh, is nat that an heih folye?
 Who may not be a fole, if that he love?
 Byholde for Goddes sake that sitteth above,
 Se how they blede! be they nought wel arrayed?
 Thus hath here lord, the god of love, hem payed
 Here wages and here fees for here servise.
 And yet wenen they to ben ful wise,
 That serven love, for ought that may bifalle.
 But this is yette the beste game of alle,
 That sche, for whom they have this jelousye,
 Can hem therfore as moche thank as me.¹
 Sche woot no more of al this hoot fare,
 By God, than wot a cuckoo or an hare.
 But all moot ben assayed hoot or colde;
 A man moot ben a fool other yong or olde;
 I woot it by myself ful yore agon: .
 For in my tyme a servant was I on.
 And sythen that I knewe of loves payne,
 And wot how sore it can a man destreyne,
 As he that hath often ben caught in his lace,
 I you forgeve holly this trespass,
 At the request of the queen that kneleth heere,
 And eek of Emely, my suster deere.
 And ye schullen bothe anon unto me swere,
 That never ye schullen my corowne dere,²
 Ne make werre on me night ne day,
 But be my freendes in alle that ye may.
 I you forgeve this trespass every dele.
 And they him swore his axyng fayre and wele,

¹ *Can* means literally *knows*; here it means to acknowledge an obligation. In the *Theseida*, Emilia is made to see the lovers when they are first enamoured of her in the garden. Chaucer's plan is an improvement, were it only because it gives him an opportunity of putting this witty speech in the mouth of Theseus.

² *Dere* means literally to *injure*, or to *harm*. The meaning of the expression here is, to undertake any enterprise against my royal authority.

And him of lordschip and of mercy prayde,
 And he hem graunted mercy, and thus he sayde :
 ' To speke of real lynage and riches,
 Though that sche were a queen or a prynces,
 Ilk of yow bothe is worthy douteles
 To wedde when tyme is, but natheles
 I speke as for my suster Emelye,
 For whom ye have this stryf and jelousye,
 Ye woot youreself sche may not wedde two
 At oones, though ye faughten ever mo :
 That oon of yow, or be him loth or leef,
 He may go pypen in an ivy leef ;¹
 This is to say, sche may nought have bothe,
 Al be ye never so jelous, ne so lothe.
 For-thy I put you bothe in this degre,
 That ilk of you schall have his destyne,²
 As him is schape, and herken in what wyse ;
 Lo here your ende of that I schal devyse.
 My wil is this, for playn conclusioun,
 Withouten eny repplicacioun,
 If that you liketh, tak it for the best,
 That every of you schal go wher him lest
 Frely withouten raunsoun or daungeer ;
 And this day fyfty wykes, fer ne neer,
 Everich of you schal bryng an hundred knightes,
 Armed for lystes up at alle rightes
 Al redy to derayne hir by batayle.
 And thus byhote I you withouten fayle
 Upon my trouthe, and as I am a knight,
 That whethir of yow bothe that hath might,

¹ This appears to be a proverbial expression, like 'he may go blow in a horn,' meaning he may console himself with any frivolous amusement he pleases. It occurs in the *Destruction of Thebes*, Part II., by Lydgate:—

' But let his brother blowe in an horn,
 Where that him list, or pipe in a reede.'

How any one was to pipe in an ivy leaf is not so clear.

² In the trial by battle, which was supposed to be an appeal to the judgment of God.

This is to seyn, that whethir he or thou
 May with his hundred, as I spak of now,
 Sle his contrary, or out of lystes dryve,
 Him schal I geve Emelye to wyve,
 To whom that fortune geveth so fair a grace.
 The lyste schal I make in this place,
 And God so wisly on my sowle rewe,
 As I schal even juge ben and trewe.
 Ye schul non othir ende with me make,
 That oon of yow schal be deed or take.
 And if you thinketh this is wel i-sayde,
 Say youre avys, and holdeth yow apayde.
 This is youre ende and youre conclusioun.¹
 Who loketh lightly now but Palamoun?
 Who spryngeth up for joye but Arcite?
 Who couthe tell, or who couthe endite,
 The joye that is made in this place
 Whan Theseus hath don so fair a grace?
 But down on knees wente every wight,
 And thanked him with al here hertes miht,
 And namely the Thebanes ofte sithe.
 And thus with good hope and herte blithe
 They taken here leve, and hom-ward they ryde
 To Thebes-ward, with olde walles wyde.

I trow men wolde it deme negligence,
 If I forgete to telle the dispence
 Of Theseus, that goth so busily
 To maken up the lystes rially.
 And such a noble theatre as it was,
 I dar wel say that in this world ther nas.
 The circuite ther was a myle aboute,
 Walled of stoon, and dyched al withoute.
 Round was the schap, in maner of compaas,
 Ful of degre,¹ the height of sixty paas,
 That whan a man was set in o degre
 He letted nought his felaw for to se.

¹ Seats placed one above another, in the manner of steps or degree, as in an amphitheatre.

Est-ward ther stood a gate of marbul whit,
 West-ward such another in opposit.
 And schortly to conclud, such a place
 Was non in erthe in so litel space.
 In al the lond ther nas no craftys man,
 That geometry or arsmetrike can,
 Ne portreyour, ne kerver of ymages,
 That Theseus ne gaf hem mete and wages
 The theatre for to maken and devyse.
 And for to don his right and sacrificse,¹
 He est-ward hath upon the gate above,
 In worschip of Venus, goddes of love,
 Don make an auter and an oratory;
 And west-ward in the mynde and in memory
 Of Mars, he hath i-maked such another,
 That coste largely of gold a fother.
 And north-ward, in a toret on the walle,
 Of alabaster whit and reed coralle
 An oratory riche for to see,
 In worschip of Dyane, goddes of chastité,
 Hath Theseus i-wrought in noble wise.
 But yit had I forgeten to devyse
 The nobil kervyng, and the purtretures,
 The schap, the contynaunce of the figures,
 That weren in these oratories thre.

Furst in the temple of Venus thou may se
 Wrought in the wal, ful pitous to byholde,
 The broken slepes, and the sykes colde;
 The sacred² teeres, and the waymentyng;
 The fuyry strokes of the desiryng,

¹ See *ante*, p. 147, note 2.—The plan of the lists is taken strictly from that of a classical amphitheatre, such as it is described in Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*. Upon this subject Mr. Currey, in his valuable edition of this treatise, remarks:—‘The games of the circus were introduced with a religious procession, and sacrifices to the idols, placed in vast numbers within the circus. The blood shed at the gladiatorial shows was supposed to propitiate the god Dis, whose altar was in the amphitheatre. The theatre was expressly dedicated to Venus, being *annexed to a temple of that goddess*.’

² Secret.

THE CANTERBURY TALES.

That loves servauntz in her lyf enduren ;
 The othes,¹ that her covenantz assuren.
 Plesance and hope, desyr, fool-hardynesse,
 Beaute and youthe, baudery and richesse,
 Charmes and sorcery,² lesynges and flattery,
 Dispense, busynes, and jealousy,
 That werud of yolo guldres a gerland,
 And a cukkow³ sittynge on hire hand ;
 Festes, instrumentz, carols, and daunces,
 Lust and array, and al the circumstaunces
 Of love, which I rekned and reken schal,
 Ech by other were peynted on the wal.
 And mo than I can make of mencioun.
 For sothly al the mount of Setheroun,⁴
 Ther Venus hath hir principal dwellyng,
 Was schewed on the wal here portraying,⁵
 With alle the gardyn, and al the lustynes.
 Nought was forgeate ; the porter Ydelnes,
 Ne Narcisus the fayr of yore agon,
 Ne yet the foly of kyng Salamon,
 Ne eek the grete strengthe of Hercules,
 Thenchautementz of Medea and Cerces,
 Ne of Turnus the hard fuyry corage,
 The riche Cresus caytif in servage.
 Thus may we see, that wisdom and riches,
 Beaute ne sleight, strengthe ne hardynes,

¹ The Harl. MS. reads ' The othes, that by her covenantz assuren ;' but ' by' has been omitted in the text, following Speght and Tyrwhitt.

² *Sorcery*, the true reading has been restored by Mr. Wright. Tyrwhitt reads *force*. The use of charms for procuring love is very ancient.—See THEOCRITUS'S *Φαρμακευτρια*.

³ A cuckoo is the emblem of unfaithfulness to the marriage vow. It is frequently alluded to by the Elizabethan writers, and supplies the burthen of many songs.—See *Love's Labour Lost*, Act v., sc. 2.

⁴ Cithæron, sacred to Venus.

⁵ Chaucer in this description has before him a church of the time in which he lived. When the whitewash is removed from the walls of our village churches, they are generally found to have been covered with fresco paintings of Scripture subjects.

Ne may with Venus holde champartye,¹
 For as sche luste the world than may sche gye.
 Lo, all this folk i-caught were in hire trace,
 Till they for wo ful often sayde allas.
 Sufficeth this ensample oon or tuo,
 And though I couthe reken a thousand mo.
 The statu of Venus, glorious for to see,
 Was naked fletyng in the large see,
 And fro the navel doun all covered was
 With wawes grene, and bright as eny glas.
 A citole in hire right hand hadde sche,
 And on hir heed, ful semely on to see,
 A rose garland ful swete and wel smellyng,
 And aboven hire heed dowves fleyng.
 Biforn hir stood hir sone Cupido,
 Upon his schuldres were wynges two ;
 And blynd he was, as it is often seene ;
 A bowe he bar and arwes fair and kene.²
 Why schuld I nought as wel telle you alle
 The portraiture, that was upon the walle
 Within the temple³ of mighty Mars the reede ?
 Al peynted was the wal in length and breede

¹ Champarty is a legal term signifying a conspiracy, in which one party agrees to help another to obtain an estate, on condition that, if obtained, it is to be divided between them. The meaning here will be, that wisdom and riches and the rest, though all conspiring together, cannot maintain a cause against Venus.

² The Harl. MS. reads *greene*. The reading in the text, which is evidently the true one, is that of some other MSS., and is followed by Tyrwhitt.

³ The description of the Temple of Mars is derived from the *Thebais*, lib. vii., 40. The introduction of familiar images of crime and suffering into this fine symbolical picture is objected to by Tyrwhitt, Scott, and other critics, as incongruous; and Mr. Wright, in extenuation of the incongruity, suggests that it arises from the confusion in the mediæval mind between the god Mars and the planet of that name, which was supposed to shed its influence on these undignified callings and calamities. This is true as far as it goes, but it only removes the difficulty one step; for why should the butcher, the barber (or surgeon), the pickpurse, and all sanguinary mischances, be supposed to be under the influence of the planet Mars, unless they were held to be pleasing to

Like to the estres of the grisly place,
 That hight the gret tempul of Mars in Trace,¹
 In that colde and frosty regioun,
 Ther as Mars hath his sovereyn mancioun.
 First on the wal was peynted a foreste,
 In which ther dwelled neyther man ne beste,
 With knotty knarry bareyn trees olde
 Of stubbes scharpe and hidous to byholde ;
 In which ther ran a swymbul in a swough,²
 As it were a storne schuld berst every bough :
 And downward on an hil under a bent,
 Ther stood the tempul of Marz armypotent,³

the god Mars? If, however, the subject be carefully considered, it will appear that Chaucer's is really the more sublime idea, and the truer symbolism. He paints no common-place picture of the 'pomp and circumstance of glorious war'—this may do for a tournament—but describes the genius of war as it manifests itself in the malignant passions which lead to strife and bloodshed: in the spirit of covetousness, which, contaminating commonwealths no less than individuals, generates hatred and contention; and in the development, even by the lower animals, of those evil propensities which become the more revolting when they assume the character of instincts. If some images seem at first sight ludicrous, such as the cook scalded for all his long ladle, let it be remembered, as a principle of art, how much the grotesque adds to the horror with which the sight of suffering affects the mind. Dryden, who rightly deemed himself informed by Chaucer's spirit, has hardly at all refined or elevated that grotesqueness, because he knew the power of familiar images. Neither magnitude nor remoteness, which are held to be elements of the sublime, strikes the imagination so forcibly as examples drawn from every-day experience. The general description of a battle is less impressive than the details of a single death; and the dignified fall of Cæsar in the Senate-house produces less terror than the execution of a common malefactor. The poet's object is to depict suffering in hideous and ordinary forms, in order to display the universality of the influence of the god, not only in great occurrences, but in the meanest incidents of life.

¹ The principal temple of Mars is described in the *Thebais* as being in Thrace, because of the warlike spirit of the inhabitants.

² Speght and Tyrwhitt, after some MSS., read *romble and a swough*. The reading in the text is from the Harleian MS., followed by Mr. Wright, who, however, furnishes no explanation of it. The *swymbul*, or sighing, heard through the general *swough*, or commotion, is finely imagined.

³ This line has a redundant syllable, which makes it necessary to read *tempul of* as one foot. Dryden, with a just appreciation of its merit, has retained it, only thus correcting the irregularity of the metre:—

'The temple stood of Mars armipotent.'

Wrought al of burned steel, of which thentrou
 Was long and streyt, and gastly for to see.
 And therout came a rage and suche a prise,¹
 That it maad al the gates for to rise.
 The northen light² in at the dore schon,
 For wyndow on the walle ne was ther noon,
 Thorough the which men might no light discerne.
 The dores wer alle ademauntz eterne,
 I-clenched overthward and endelong
 With iren tough; and, for to make it strong,
 Every piler the tempul to susteene
 Was tonne greet, of iren³ bright and schene.
 Ther saugh I furst the derk ymaginyng
 Of felony, and al the compassyng;
 The cruel ire, as reed as eny gleede;
 The pikepurs, and eek the pale drede;
 The smyler with the knyf under his cloke;
 The schipne brennyng with the blake smoke;
 The tresoun of the murtheryng in the bed;⁴
 The open werres, with woundes al bi-bled;
 Contek with bloody knyf, and scharp manace.
 Al ful of chirkyng was that sory place.

¹ Speght reads, *such a rage and a vise*; Tyrwhitt, *swiche a vise*. The meaning of the reading in the text is not obvious. [The right reading is *rese*, glossed by *impetus* in the Ellesmere MS., and apparently from the same source as *pheeze*. The A.-S. *fūs* means impetuous, and A.-S. *fýsan* is to rush, to drive; cf. Swed. *fösa*, to drive. Thus *rese* means a rush, as of a blast. In the next line the right reading is *rese*, to shake, to rattle. The reading *rise* makes nonsense.—W. W. S.]

² *Aurora borealis*.

Læditur adversum Phœbi jubar, ipsaque sedem

Lux timet, et dirus contristat sidera fulgor.—*Thebais*, vii., 45.

Tyrwhitt does not notice the idea of the temple being illumined by the northern light, as derived from the *Theseida*; Chaucer, therefore, is probably entitled to the full credit of this fine image.

³ The poet probably had in his mind a Norman cathedral, with its round massive piers, so different from the light elegant clustered shafts of the architecture of his own time, and so appropriate to the temple of the stern god of arms.

⁴ In allusion to the Danaidæ.

The sleer of himself yet saugh I there,
 His herte-blood hath bathed al his here;
 The nayl y-dryve in the schode a-nyght;¹
 The colde deth, with mouth gapyng upright.
 Amyddes of the tempul set mischaunce,
 With sory comfort and evel contynaunce.
 I saugh woodnes² laughying in his rage;
 Armed complaint, outhees, and fiers outrage.³
 The caroigne in the busshe, with throte y-corve:
 A thousand slaine, and not of qualme y-storve;
 The tiraunte, with the preye by force y-raft;
 The toun destroyed, ther was no thyng laft.
 Yet sawgh I brente the schippes hoppesteres;⁴
 The hunte strangled with the wild beres:
 The sowe⁵ freten the child right in the cradel;
 The cook⁶ i-skalded, for al his longe ladel.

¹ An allusion, perhaps, to the death of Sisera.—*Judges*, iv.

² Lætusque furor.—*Thebais*, vii.

³ The Harl. MS. reads—

‘The hunt strangled with wilde bores corage,’

which is evidently corrupt, for the boar does not strangle, but rips up his pursuer; and the same words are applied immediately afterwards with greater propriety to the bear. Tyrwhitt's reading, which is more consonant with the accurate character of Chaucer's imagery, is therefore adopted in the text. The poet probably had in his mind the predatory incursions of the borderers of England and Scotland, which often involved the two countries in feuds, such as led to the battle of Chevy Chase or Otterbourne. The word *outhees*, meaning outcry, is from the barbarous Latin *Hutesium*, and enters into the composition of our expression, ‘*Hue and cry*,’ and, indeed, of *outcry*.

⁴ *Bellatrices carinæ*.—*Thebais*. Speght interprets this word *pilots* (*gubernaculum tenentes*); Tyrwhitt, *female dancers*, applied to ships as dancing on the waves. None of the commentators appear to have met the word elsewhere.

⁵ This is not an uncommon accident in countries where the swine are allowed to roam at large, as was usual with our Saxon ancestors, and in Ireland at the present day. Dryden has not improved upon the passage by rendering it—

‘The new-born babe by nurses overlaid.’

⁶ We have here an illustration of the time when men lived in large communities, and cookery was performed on a grand scale, as when the whole garrison of a feudal castle, or an entire brotherhood of monks in an abbey, dined together in the common hall.

Nought beth forgeten the infortune of Mart;
 The carter¹ over-ryden with his cart,
 Under the whel ful lowe he lay adoun.
 Ther wer also of Martz divisioun,
 The barbour,² and the bowcher, and the smyth,
 That forgeth scharpe swerdes on his stith.
 And al above depeynted in a tour
 Saw I conquest sitting in gret honour,
 With the scharpe swerd over his heed
 Hangynge by a sotil twyne threed.³
 Depeynted was ther the slaught of Julius,
 Of grete Nero, and of Anthonius;
 Al be that ilke tyme they were unborn,
 Yet was here deth depeynted ther byform,
 By manasyng of Martz, right by figure,
 So was it schewed right in the purtreture
 As is depeynted in sterres above,
 Who schal be slayn or elles deed for love.
 Sufficeth oon ensample in stories olde,
 I may not reken hem alle, though I wolde.

The statue of Mars upon a carte stood,
 Armed, and loked grym as he were wood;
 And over his heed ther schyneth two figures
 Of sterres, that been cleped in scriptures,
 That oon Puella, that othur Rubius.⁴
 This god of armes was arayed thus.

¹ Et vacui currus, protritaque curribus ora.—*Thebais*.

² The barber in the middle ages exercised the office of blood letter and chirurgeon generally: hence one of the mercantile companies in the Corporation of London is still called the Barber-surgeons' Company. The pole, usually fixed outside barbers' shops, 'was to show that the master of the shop practised surgery, and could breathe a vein as well as mow a beard; such a staff being to this day, by every village practitioner, put into the hand of a patient undergoing the operation of phlebotomy.'—*Antiquarian Repository*.

³ Apparently an allusion to the sword of Damocles.

⁴ The names of two figures in geomancy, representing two constellations in Heaven. Puella signifieth Mars retrograde, and Rubeus Mars direct.—S.

A wolf ther stood byforn him at his feet
 With eyen reed, and of a man he eet;
 With sotyl pencil depeynted was this storie.
 In redoutyng of Mars and of his glorie.

Now to the temple of Dyane the chaste
 As schortly as I can I wol me haste,
 To telle you al the descripcioun.
 Depeynted ben the walles up and down,
 Of huntyng and of schamefast chastité.
 Ther saugh I how woful Calystopé,¹
 Whan that Dyane was agreved with here,
 Was turned from a womman to a bere,
 And after was sche maad the loode-sterre;
 Thus was it peynted, I can say no ferre;
 Hire son is eek a sterre, as men may see.
 Ther sawgh I Dyane² turned intil a tree,
 I mene nought the goddes Dyane,
 But Peneus doughter, the whiche hight Dane.
 Ther saugh I Atheon³ an hert i-maked,
 For vengeance that he saugh Dyane al naked;
 I saugh how that his houndes han him caught,
 And freten him, for that they knew him naught.
 Yit i-peynted was a litel forthermore.
 How Atthalaunce⁴ huntid the wild bore,
 And Melyagre, and many another mo,
 For which Dyane wrought hem care and woo.
 Ther saugh I eek many another story,
 The which me list not drawe to memory.
 This goddes on an hert ful hye seet,
 With smale houndes al aboute hire feet,
 And undernethe hir feet sche had the moone,
 Wexyng it was, and schulde wane soone.
 In gaude greene hire statue clothed was,
 With bowe in hande, and arwes in a cas.

¹ Callisto, a daughter of Lycaon, king of Arcadia.—See OVID'S *Fusti*, ii. 153.

² Daphne.—OVID'S *Metamorph.*, i., 450.

³ Actæon.—OVID'S *Metamorph.*, iii., 138.

⁴ Atalanta.—OVID'S *Metamorph.*, x., 560.

Hir eyghen caste sche ful lowe adoun,
 Ther Pluto hath his derke regioun.
 A womman travailyng¹ was hire biforn,
 But for hire child so longe was unborn
 Ful pitously Lucyna gan sche calle,
 And seyde, ' Help, for thou mayst best of alle.'
 Wel couthe he peynte lyfly that it wrought,
 With many a floren he the hewes bought.

Now been thise listes maad, and Theseus
 That at his grete cost arayed thus
 The temples and the theatres every del,
 Whan it was don, it liked him right wel.
 But stynt I wil of Theseus a lite,
 And speke of Palamon and of Arcite.

The day approacheth of her attournyng,²
 That every schuld an hundred knightes bryng,
 The batail to derreyne, as I you tolde;
 And til Athenes, her covenant to holde,
 Hath every of hem brought an hundred knightes
 Wel armed for the werre at alle rightes.
 And sikerly ther trowed many a man
 That never, siththen that this world bigan,
 For to speke of knighthod of her hond,
 As fer as God has maked sea or lond,
 Nas, of so fewe, so good a company.
 For every wight that loveth chyvalry,
 And wold, his thankes,³ have a passant name,
 Hath preyed that he might be of that game;
 And wel was him, that therto chosen was.
 For if ther felle to morwe such a caas,
 I knowe wel, that every lusty knight,
 That loveth paramours, and hath his might,
 Were it in Engelond, or elleswhere,
 They wold, here thankes, wilne to be there.

¹ Diana, when invoked as the goddess presiding over child-birth, was called Lucina.

² Speght and Tyrwhitt read, *returning*. ³ See *ante*, p. 140, note 1.

To fighte for a lady; *benedicite!*
 It were a lusty sighte for to see.
 And right so ferden they with Palamon.
 With him ther wente knyghtes many oon;
 Some wol ben armed in an haburgoun,
 In a bright brest plat and a gypoun;
 And som wold have a peyre plates large;
 And som wold have a Pruce scheld, or a targe;
 Som wol been armed on here legges weel,
 And have an ax, and eek a mace of steel.
 Ther nys no newe gyse, that it nas old.
 Armed were they, as I have you told,
 Everich after his owen opinioun.

Ther maistow¹ se comyng with Palamoun
 Ligure himself, the grete kyng of Trace;
 Blak was his berd, and manly was his face.
 The cercles of his eyen in his heed
 They gloweden bytwixe yolw and reed,
 And lik a griffoun loket he aboute,
 With kempe heres on his browes stowte;
 His lymes greet, his brawnes hard and stronge,
 His schuldres brood, his armes rounde and longe.
 And as the gyse was in his contré,
 Ful heye upon a chare of gold stood he,
 With foure white boles in a trays.
 In stede of cote armour in his harnays,
 With nales yolwe, and bright as eny gold,
 He had a bere skyn, cole-blak for old.
 His lange heer y-kempt byhynd his bak,
 As eny raven fether it schon for blak.²
 A wrethe of gold arm-gret, and huge of wight,
 Upon his heed, set ful of stoones bright,
 Of fyne rubeus and of fyn dyamauntz.
 Aboute his chare wente white alaunz,³

¹ Mayest thou.—See *ante*, p. 123, note 2.

² For blackness.

³ Speght interprets *alaunz*, greyhounds; Tyrwhitt, mastiffs. The latter was apparently misled by the fact that the wolf-dog, generally known by the name of the *Irish greyhound*, because used most recently

Twenty and mo, as grete as eny stere,
 To hunte at the lyoun or at the bere,
 And folwed him, with mosel fast i-bounde,
 Colerd with golde, and torettes fyled rounde.
 An hundred lordes had he in his route
 Armed ful wel, with hertes stern and stoute.

With Arcita, in stories as men fynde,
 The gret Emetreus, the kyng of Ynde,
 Uppon a steede bay, trapped in steel,
 Covered with cloth of gold dyapred wel,
 Cam rydyng lyk the god of armes Mars.
 His coote armour was of a cloth of Tars,
 Cowched of perlys whyte, round and grete.
 His sadil was of brend gold newe bete;
 A mantelet upon his schuldre hangyng
 Bret-ful of rubies reed, as fir sparcl yng.
 His crispe her lik rynges was i-ronne,
 And that was yalwe, and gliteryng as the sonne.
 His nose was heigh, his eyen were cytryne,
 His lippes rounde, his colour was sangwyn,
 A fewe freknes in his face y-spreynd,
 Betwixe yolwe and somdel blak y-meynd,
 And as a lyoun he his lokyng caste.
 Of fyve and twenty yeer his age I caste.
 His berd was wel bygonne for to spryde;
 His voys was as a trumpe thunderynge.
 Upon his heed he wered of laurer grene
 A garlond freisch and lusty for to sene.
 Upon his hond he bar for his delyt
 An egle¹ tame, as eny lylie whyt.

In that country, is called by Buffon *le matin*. It was a dog of great power and swiftness, of which specimens were preserved till within a few years by gentlemen of fortune as curiosities.

¹ The rage for hawking reached so great a height in the middle ages, that falcons were carried on the fist and petted on the most solemn occasions, and when not wanted for the sport. There are many examples of kings requiring so many falcons as ransom or tribute. To make Emetrius carry a tame eagle on his hand must, however, be an exaggeration, intended to give an idea of the gigantic strength and

An hundred lordes had he with him ther,
 Al armed sauf here hedes in here ger,
 Ful richely in alle maner thinges.
 For trusteth wel, that dukes, erles, kynges,
 Were gadred in this noble companye,
 For love, and for ences of chivalrye.
 Aboute the kyng ther ran on every part
 Ful many a tame lyoun and lepart.
 And in this wise thes lordes alle and some
 Been on the Sonday to the cité come
 Aboute prime, and in the toyn alight.
 This Theseus, this duk, this worthy knight,
 Whan he had brought hem into his cité,
 And ynned hem, everich at his degré
 He festeth him, and doth so gret labour
 To esen hem, and do hem al honour,
 That yit men wene that no mannes wyt
 Of non estat that cowde amenden it.
 The mynstralcy, the servyce at the feste,
 The grete giftes to the most and leste,
 The riche aray of Theseus paleys,
 Ne who sat first ne last upon the deys,
 What ladies fayrest ben or best daunsyng,
 Or which of hem can daunce best or sing,
 Ne who most felyngly speketh of love;
 What haukes sitten on the perche above,
 What houndes lyen in the floor adoun:
 Of al this make I now no mencion;
 But of theffect; that thinketh me the beste;
 Now comth the poynt, and herkneth if you leste.
 The Sonday night, or day bigan to springe,
 When Palamon the larke herde synge,
 Although it were nought day by houres tuo,
 Yit sang the larke, and Palamon also

stature of the Indian king, and the strangeness of his tastes. The same
 remark applies to his being accompanied by *many* tame lions and
 leopards.

With holy herte, and with an heih corage
 He roos, to wenden on his pilgrymage
 Unto the blisful Cithera benigne,
 I mene Venus, honorable and digne.
 And in hire¹ hour he walketh forth a paas
 Unto the lystes, ther hir temple was,
 And doun he kneleth, and, with humble cheer
 And herte sore, he seide as ye schal heer.

‘ Fairest of faire, o lady myn Venus,
 Doughter of Jove, and spouse to Vulcanus,
 Thou glader of the mount of Citheroun,
 For thilke love thou haddest to Adeoun²
 Have pité on my bitter teeres smerte,
 And tak myn humble prayer to thin herte.
 Allas ! I ne have no langage for to telle
 Theeffectes ne the tormentz of myn helle ;
 Myn herte may myn harmes nat bewreie ;
 I am so confus, that I may not seye.
 But mercy, lady bright, that knowest wel
 My thought, and felest what harm that I fel,
 Consider al this, and rew upon my sore,
 As wisly as I schal for evermore
 Enforce my might thi trewe servant to be,
 And holde werre alday with chastité ;
 That make I myn avow, so ye me helpe.
 I kepe nat of armes for to yelpe.³

¹ In a long note upon this place, Tyrwhitt quotes from the *Kalendar de Bergiers*, published in the year 1500, from which it appears that the hours of the day were assigned to the several planets in the following order:—Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Sol, Venus, Mercury, Luna. The first hour after sunrise belonged to the planet which gave its name to the day ; in this case, being Sunday, the first hour belonged to Sol. Now, if the hours be counted, it will be found that the twenty-second, or two hours before sunrise on Monday morning, at which time Palamon set out for the Temple, belonged to Venus ; and that Arcite and Emily were equally accurate in observing the proper hours for their several devotions.

² Adonis.

³ I care not to whine about success in arms, spoken in contempt of mere glory.

Ne nat I aske to morn to have victorie,
 Ne renoun in this caas, ne veyne glorie
 Of pris of armes, blowyng up and doun,
 But I wolde have ful possessioun
 Of Emelye, and dye in thi servise ;
 Fynd thou the maner how, and in what wyse.
 I recche nat, but it may better be,
 To have victorie of him, or he of me,
 So that I have my lady in myn armes.
 For though so be that Mars be god of armes,
 And ye be Venus, the goddes of love,
 Youre vertu is so gret in heaven above,
 Thy temple wol I worschipe evermo,
 And on thin auter, wher I ryde or go,
 I wol do sacrifice, and fyres beete.
 And if ye wol nat so, my lady sweete,
 Than pray I the, to morwe with a spere
 That Arcita me thurgh the herte bere.
 Thanne rekke I nat, whan I have lost my lyf,
 Though that Arcite have hir to his wyf.
 This is theeffect and end of my prayere ;
 Gif me my love, thou blisful lady deere.
 Whan thorisoun was doon of Palamon,
 His sacrifice he dede, and that anoon
 Ful pitously, with alle circumstances,
 Al telle I nat as now his observances.
 But at the last the statu of Venus schook,
 And made a signe, wherby that he took
 That his prayer accepted was that day.
 For though the signe schewed a delay,
 Yet wist he wel that graunted was his boone ;
 And with giad herte he went him hom ful soone.
 The thrid hour inequal¹ that Palamon
 Bigan to Venus temple for to goon,

¹ [The usual clock-hours were equal. But the astrological were 'unequal,' because the day from sunrise to sunset was divided into twelve portions, which varied daily, and were, except at the equinoxes, unequal in length to the 'hours' of the *night*.--W. W. S.]

Up roos the sonne, and up roos Emelye,
 And to the temple of Dian gan sche hye.
 Hir maydens, that sche with hir thider laddē,
 Ful redily with hem the fyr they hadde,
 Thencens, the clothes, and the remenant al
 That to the sacrifice longen schal ;
 The hornes ful of meth, as is the gyse ;
 Ther lakketh nought to do here sacrificise.
 Smokyng the temple, ful of clothes faire,
 This Emelye with herte debonaire
 Hir body wessch with watir of a welle ;
 But how sche dide I ne dar nat telle,
 But it be eny thing in general ;
 And yet it were a game to here it al ;
 To him that meneth wel it were no charge :
 But it is good a man be at his large.
 Hir brighte her was kempt, untressed al ;
 A corone of a grene ok cerial
 Upon hir heed was set ful fair and meete.
 Tuo fyres on the auter gan sche beete,
 And did hir thinges, as men may biholde
 In Stace of Thebes¹ and the bokes olde.
 Whan kynled was the fyre, with pitous cheere
 Unto Dyan sche spak, as ye may heere.

‘ O chaste goddes of the woodes greene,
 To whom bothe heven and erthe and see is seene
 Queen of the regne of Pluto derk and lowe,
 Goddes of maydenes, that myn hert has knowe
 Ful many a yeer, ye woot what I desire,
 As keep me fro the vengans of thilk yre,
 That Atheon² aboughte trewely :
 Chaste goddesse, wel wost thou that I
 Desire to ben a mayden al my lyf,
 Ne never wol I be no love ne wyf.

¹ In the *Thebais* of Statius, a Latin poet, who lived in the reign of Domitian, already quoted.

² Actæon.

I am, thou wost, yit of thi company,
 A mayden, and love huntynge and venery,
 And for to walken in the woodes wylde,
 And nought to ben a wyf, and be with chylde
 Nought wol I knowe the company of man.
 Now helpe me, lady, sythnes ye may and kan,
 For the thre formes¹ that thou hast in the.
 And Palamon, that hath such love to me,
 And eek Arcite, that loveth me so sore,
 This grace I praye the withouten more,
 As sende love and pees betwix hem two ;
 And fro me torne away here hertes so,
 That al here hoote love, and here desire,
 Al here besy torment, and al here fyre
 Be queynt, or turned in another place.
 And if so be thou wol do me no grace,
 Or if my destyné be schapid so,
 That I schal needes have on of hem two,
 So send me him that most desireth me.
 Biholde, goddes of clene chastité,
 The bitter teeres that on my cheekes falle.
 Syn thou art mayde, and keper of us alle,
 My maydenhode thou kepe and wel conserve
 And whil I lyve a mayde I wil the serve.'

The fyres bren upon the auter cleer,
 Whil Emelye was in hire preyer ;
 But sodeinly sche saugh a sighte queynt,
 For right anon on of the fyres queynt,
 And quyked agayn, and after that anon
 That other fyr was queynt, and al agon ;
 And as it queynt, it made a whistelyng,
 As doth a wete brond in his brennyng.
 And at the brondes end out ran anon
 As it were bloody dropes many oon ;²

¹ In Harl. MS. *thre* is omitted, evidently by mistake. Diana is called Diva Triformis, in heaven Luna, on earth Diana and Lucina and in hell Proserpina.

² The quenching of one of the fires denoted the defeat of Palamon, and the quickening again his final success. The quenching of the other

For which so sore agast was Emelye,
 That sche was wel neih mad, and gan to crie,
 For sche ne wiste what it signified ;
 But oonely for feere thus sche cryed,
 And wepte, that it was pité to heere.
 And therewithal Dyane gan appeere,
 With bow in hond, right as a hunteresse,
 And seyde ; ‘ A ! doughter, stynt thyn hevynesse.
 Among the goddes hye it is affermed,
 And by eterne word write and confermed,
 Thou schalt be wedded unto oon of tho,
 That have for the so moche care and wo ;
 But unto which of hem may I nat telle.
 Farewel, for I may her no lenger dwelle.
 The fyres which that on myn auter bren
 Schuln the declare, or that thou go hen,
 Thyn adventure of love, and in this caas.’
 And with that word, the arwes in the caas
 Of the goddesse clatren faste and rynge,
 And forth sche went, and made vanyschyng,
 For which this Emelye astoneyd was,
 And seide, ‘ What amounteth this, allas !
 I put me under thy proteccioun,
 Dyane, and in thi disposicioun.’
 And hoom sche goth anon the nexte way.
 This is theeffect, ther nys no mor to say.

The next houre of Mars folwyng this,¹
 Arcite to the temple walkyd is,
 To fyry Mars to doon his sacrifise,
 With al the rightes of his payen wise.
 With pitous herte and heih devocioun,
 Right thus to Mars he sayd his orisoun :
 ‘ O stronge god, that in the reynes cold
 Of Trace honoured and lord art y-hold,

fire, and its dropping blood, and going out with a whistling noise, signifies Arcite's violent death and last sighs.

¹ The next hour of Mars following this, will be found to be three hours after that of Diana.

And hast in every regne and every land
 Of armes al the bridel in thy hand,
 And hem fortunest as the lust devyse
 Accept of me my pitous sacrifice.
 If so be that my youthe may deserve,
 And that my might be worthi for to serve
 Thy godhed, that I may ben on of thine,
 Then pray I the to rewe on my pyne,
 For thilke peyne, and that hote fuyre,
 In which whilom thou brendest for desyre,
 When that thou usedest the gret bewté
 Of faire freissche Venus, that is so free,
 And haddest hir in armes at thy wille ;
 And though the ones on a tyme mysfille,
 When Vulcanus had caught the in his laas,
 And fand the liggyng by his wyf, allaas !
 For thilke sorwe that was in thin herte,
 Have reuthe as wel upon my peynes smerte.
 I am yong and unkonnyng, as thou wost,
 And, as I trowe, with love offendid most,
 That ever was eny lyves creature ;
 For sche, that doth me al this wo endure,
 Ne rekketh never whether I synke or flete.
 And wel I woot, or sche me mercy heete,
 I moot with strengthe wyn hir in the place ;
 And wel I wot, withouten help or grace
 Of the, ne may my strengthe nought avayle.
 Then help me, lord, to morn¹ in my batayle,
 For thilke fyr that whilom brende the,
 As wel as this fire now brenneth me ;
 And do to morn that I have the victorie.
 Myn be the travail, al thin be the glorie.
 Thy sovereign tempul wol I most honouren
 Of any place, and alway most labouren
 In thy plesaunce and in thy craftes strong.
 And in thy tempul I wol my baner hong,²

¹ To-morrow, in the morning; i. e., the morning which is coming.

² It was usual for a knight to hang up his banner in the church.

And alle the armes of my companye,
 And ever more, unto that day I dye,
 Eterne fyr I wol bifore the fynde.
 And eek to this avow I wol me bynde :
 My berd, myn heer that hangeth longe adoun,
 That never yit ne felt offensioun
 Of rasour ne of schere, I wol thee give,¹
 And be thy trewe servaunt whiles I lyve.
 Lord, have rowthe uppon my sorwes sore,
 Gif me the victorie, I aske no more.'

The preyer stynt of Arcita the strange,
 The rynges on the tempul dore that hange,
 And eek the dores, clatereden ful fast,
 Of which Arcita somewhat was agast.
 The fyres brenden on the auter bright,
 That it gan al the tempul for to light;
 A swote smel anon the ground upgaf,
 And Arcita anon his hand up haf,
 And more encens into the fyr yet cast,
 With othir rightes, and than atte last
 The statu of Mars bigan his hauberk ryng.
 And with that soun he herd a murmuryng
 Ful lowe and dym, and sayde this, 'Victorie.'
 For which he gaf to Mars honour and glorie.
 And thus with joye, and hope wel to fare,
 Arcite anoon unto his inne is fare,
 As fayn as foul is of the bright sonne.
 And right anon such stryf is bygonne²
 For that grauntyng, in the heven above,
 Bitwix Venus the goddes of love,

after the conclusion of his service, in acknowledgment that the grace to preserve it without reproach was from above. The banners of the Knights of the Garter are, to this day, hung up in St. George's Chapel.

¹ This custom appears to have been derived from the Jewish law. St. Paul is said to have 'shorn his head at Cenchrea, for he had a vow.' Acts xviii. Cutting off the hair is a ceremony still observed at the profession of nuns.

² The strife in Heaven is taken from the *Thebais*, i., 212.

And Martz the sterne god armypotent,
 That Jupiter was busy it to stent;
 Til that the pale Saturnes the colde,
 That knew so many of adventures olde,
 Fond in his olde experiens an art,
 That he ful sone hath plesed every part.
 As soth is sayd, eelde hath gret advantage,
 In eelde is bothe wisdom and usage;
 Men may the eelde at-ren, but nat at-rede.
 Saturne anon, to stynte stryf and drede,
 Al be it that it be agayns his kynde,
 Of al this stryf he can a remedy fynde.
 'My deere doughter Venus,' quod Satourne,
 'My cours, that hath so wyde for to tourne,¹
 Hath more power than woot eny man.
 Myn is the drenchyng in the see so wan;
 Myn is the prisoun in the derke cote;
 Myn is the stranglyng and hangyng by the throte;
 The murmur, and the cherles rebellyng;
 The groyning, and the pryvé enpoysonyng,
 I do vengeance and pleyn correctioun,
 Whiles I dwelle in the signe of the lyoun.
 Myn is the ruen of the hihe halles,
 The fallyng of the toures and the walles
 Upon the mynour or the carpenter.
 I slowh Sampson in schakyng the piler.
 And myne ben the maladies colde,
 The derke tresoun, and the castes olde;
 Myn lokyng is the fadir of pestilens.
 Now wepe nomore, I schal do my diligence,
 That Palamon, that is myn owen knight,
 Schal have his lady, as thou him bihight.
 Thow Martz schal kepe his knight, yet nevertheles
 Bitwixe you ther moot som tyme be pees;
 Al be ye nought of oo complexioun,
 That ilke day causeth such divisioun.

¹ Saturn being, of the planets then known, the most distant from the sun.

I am thi ayel, redy at thy wille;
Wepe thou nomore, I wol thi lust fulfille.
Now wol I stynt of the goddes above,
Of Mars, and of Venus goddes of love,
And telle you, as plainly as I can,
The grete effecte for that I bigan.

Gret was the fest in Athenus that day,
And eek that lusty sesoun of that May
Made every wight to ben in such plesaunce,
That al the Monday jousten they and daunce,
And spende it in Venus heigh servise.
But by the cause that they schuln arise
Erly a-morwe for to see that fight,
Unto their reste wente they at nyght.
And on the morwe whan the day gan spryng,
Of hors and hernoys noyse and clateryng
Ther was in the oostes al aboute;
And to the paleys rood ther many a route
Of lordes, upon steede and palfreys.
Ther mayst thou see devysyng of herneys
So uncowth and so riche wrought and wel
Of goldsmithry, of browdyng, and of steel;
The scheldes bright, testers, and trappures;
Gold-beten helmes, hauberks, and cote armures;
Lordes in paramentes on her coursers,
Knightes of retenu, and eek squyers
Rayhyng the speres, and helmes bokelyng,
Girdyng of scheeldes, with layneres lasyng;
Ther as need is, they were nothing ydel;
Ther fomen steedes, on the golden bridel
Gnawying, and faste armurers also
With fyle and hamer prikyng to and fro;
Yemen on foote, and knaves many oon
With schorte staves, as thikke as they may goon;
Pypes, trompes, nakers, and clariounes,
That in the batail blewe bloody sownes;
The paleys ful of pepul up and down,
Heer thre, ther ten, haldyng her questioun,

Dyvynyng of this Thebans knyghtes two.
 Som seyden thus, som seyde it schal be so ;
 Som heelde with him with the blake berd,
 Som with the ballyd, some with thikke hered ;
 Som sayd he lokyd grym as he wold fight ;
 He hath a sparth of twenti pound of wight.
 Thus was the halle ful of devynyng,
 Lang after that the sonne gan to spring.
 The gret Theseus that of his sleep is awaked
 With menstralcye and noyse that was maked,
 Held yit the chambre of his paleys riche,
 Til that the Thebanes knyghtes bothe i-liche
 Honoured weren, and into paleys fet.
 Duk Theseus was at a wyndow set,
 Arayed right as he were god in trone.
 The pepul preseth thider-ward ful sone
 Him for to seen, and doon him reverence,
 And eek herken his hest and his sentence.
 An herowd on a skaffold made a hoo,¹
 Til al the noyse of the pepul was i-doo ;
 And whan he sawh the pepul of noyse al stille,
 Thus schewed he the mighty dukes wille.

‘The lord hath of his heih discrecioun
 Considered, that it were destruccioun
 To gentil blood, to fighten in this wise
 Of mortal batail now in this emprise ;
 Wherfore to schapen that they schuld not dye,
 He wol his firste purpos modifye.
 No man therfore, up peyne of los of lyf,
 No maner schot, ne pollax, ne schort knyf
 Into the lystes sende, or thider bryng ;
 Ne schorte swerd for to stoke the point bytyng
 No man ne draw, ne bere by his side.

¹ Cried Ho ! to enjoin silence. Tyrwhitt, who reads *O*, supposes that it may be a contraction for *Oyez*, but quotes a passage from Holinshed which confirms the other supposition. ‘The Duke of Norfolk was not fully set forward when the king cast down his warder, and the heralds cried Ho ! Ho !’

Ne noman schal unto his felawe ryde
 But oon cours, with a scharpe spere ;
 Feyne if him lust on foote, himself to were.
 And he that is at meschief, schal be take,
 And nat slayn, but be brought to the stake,
 That schal be ordeyned on eyther syde ;
 But thider he schal by force, and ther abyde.
 And if so falle, a cheventen be take
 On eyther side, or elles sle his make,
 No lenger schal the turneynge laste.
 God spede you ; goth forth and ley on faste.
 With long swerd¹ and with mace fight your fille.
 Goth now your way ; this is the lordes wille.'

The voice of the poepul touchith heven,
 So lowde cried thei with mery steven :
 'God save such a lord that is so good,
 He wilneth no destruccioun of blood !'
 Up goth the trompes and the melodye.
 And to the lystes ryde the companye
 By ordynaunce, thurgh the cité large,
 Hangyng with cloth of gold, and not with sarge.
 Ful lik a lord this nobul duk can ryde,
 These tuo Thebans on eyther side ;
 And after rood the queen, and Emelye,
 And after hem of ladyes another companye,
 And after hem of comunes after here degre.²
 And thus they passeden thurgh that cité,

¹ A knight in armour was in very little danger from a cut of a broadsword, or even from the blow of a mace, but a thrusting sword might easily pierce through the joints of his armour. 'Still the Christians proved good men, and, secure in their unconquerable spirits, kept constantly advancing, while the Turks kept constantly threatening them in the rear ; but their blows *fell harmless upon the defensive armour*: this caused the Turks to slacken in courage at the failure of their attempts, and they began to murmur in whispers of disappointment, crying out in their rage, 'that *our people were of iron and would yield to no blow.*'—*Itinerary of Richard I.*, by GEOFFREY DE VINSANF. book iv. c. 12.

² These two lines are rejected by Mr. Wright, but are here restored from the Harl. MS. instead of the common reading. They are more in

And to the lystes come thei by tyme.
 It nas not of the day yet fully pryme,
 Whan sette was Theseus riche and hye,
 Ypolita the queen and Emelye,
 And other ladyes in here degrees aboute.
 Unto the settes passeth al the route ;
 And west-ward, thorough the gates of Mart.
 Areite, and eek the hundred of his part,
 With baners red ys entred right anoon ;
 And in that selve moment Palamon
 Is, under Venus, est-ward in that place,
 With baner whyt, and hardy cheer of face.

In al the world, to seeke up and down,
 So even without variacioun
 Ther nere suche companyes tweye.
 For ther nas noon so wys that cowthe seye,
 That any had of other avauntage
 Of worthines, ne staat, ne of visage,
 So evene were they chosen for to gesse.
 And in two ringes faire they hem dresse.
 And whan here names i-rad were everychon,
 That in here nombre gile were ther noon,
 Tho were the gates schitt, and cried lowde :
 ‘Doth now your devoir,¹ yonge knightes proude!’
 The heraldz laften here prikyng up and down ;
 Now ryngede the tromp and clarioun ;
 Ther is nomore to say, but est and west
 In goth the speres into the rest ;²
 Ther seen men who ean juste, and who can ryde ;
 In goth the scharpe spere into the side.
 Ther schyveren schaftes upon schuldres thyk ;
 He feeleth thurgh the herte-spon the prik.

Chaucer's manner, from the minuteness of their description of the scene. The reader will remark that they are both Alexandrines.

¹ The usual word of encouragement on such occasions. It is curious that Nelson, in his celebrated signal before the battle of Trafalgar, should have adopted the very words of chivalry.

² The *rest* was a sort of holster attached to the stirrup, in which the butt end of the lance was placed to keep it steady.

Up sprengen speres on twenty foot on hight ;
 Out goon the swerdes as the silver bright.
 The helmes there to-hewen and to-schrede ;
 Out brast the blood, with stoute stremes reede
 With mighty maces the bones thay to-breste,
 He thurgh the thikkest of the throng gan threste.
 Ther stomblen steedes strong, and down can falle.
 He rolleth under foot as doth a balle.
 He feyneth on his foot with a tronchoun,
 And him hurteleth with his hors adoun.
 He thurgh the body hurt is, and siththen take
 Maugré his heed, and brought unto the stake,
 As forward was, right ther he most abyde.
 Another lad is on that other syde.
 And som tyme doth Theseus hem to rest,
 Hem to refreissche, and drinke if hem lest.
 Ful ofte a-day have this Thebans twoo
 Togider y-met, and wrought his felaw woo ;
 Unhorsed hath ech other of hem tweye.
 Ther nas no tygyr in the vale of Galgopleye,¹
 Whan that hir whelpe is stole, whan it is lite,
 So cruel on the hunt, as is Arcite
 For jelous hert upon this Palamon :
 Ne in Belmary ther is no fel lyoun,
 That hunted is, or is for hunger wood,
 Ne of his prey desireth so the blood,
 As Palamon to sle his foo Arcite.
 The jelous strokes on here helmes byte ;
 Out renneth blood on bothe here sides reede.
 Som tyme an ende ther is on every dede ;
 For er the sonne unto the reste went,
 The strange kyng Emetreus gan hent

¹ This word is variously written ; Colaphey, Galgaphey, Galapey.
 There was a town called Galapha, in Mauritania Tangitana, upon the
 river Malva (*Cellar. Geog. Ant.*, v. ii., p. 935), which, perhaps, may
 have given name to the vale here meant.—T. Belmarie was noticed,
ante, p. 78, note 3.

This Palamon, as he faught with Arcite,
 And his swerd in his fleissch he did byte ;
 And by the force of twenti he is take
 Unyolden, and i-drawe unto the stake.
 And in the reseous of this Palamon
 The stronge kyng Ligurgius is born adoun ;
 And kyng Emetreus for al his strengthe
 Is born out of his sadel his swerdes lengthe,
 So hit him Palamon er he were take ;
 But al for nought, he was brought to the stake
 His hardy herte might him helpe nought ;
 He most abyde whan that he was caught,
 By force, and eek by composicioun.¹
 Who sorweth now but woful Palamoun,
 That moot nomore gon agayn to fight ?
 And whan that Theseus had seen that sight,
 He cryed, ' Hoo ! nomore, for it is doon !
 Ne noon schal lenger unto his felaw goon.
 I wol be trewe juge, and nought partye.
 Arcyte of Thebes schal have Emelye,
 That hath by his fortune hire i-wonne.'
 Anoon ther is noyse bygonne
 For joye of this, so lowde and hey withalle,
 It semed that the listes wolde falle.
 What can now fayre Venus doon above ?
 What seith sche now ? what doth this queen of
 love ?
 But wepeth so, for wantyng of hir wille,
 Til that hire teeres in the lystes fille ;
 Sche seyde : ' I am aschamed douteles.'
 Satourneus seyde : ' Doughter, hold thy pees.
 Mars hath his wille, his knight hath his boone,
 And by myn heed thou schalt be esed soone.'
 The trompes with the lowde mynstraley,
 The herawdes, that ful lowde yolle and ery,
 Been in here joye for daun Arcyte.
 But herkneth me, and stynteth but a lite,

¹ By agreement.

Which¹ a miracle bifel anoon.
 This Arcyte fersly hath don his heim adoun,
 And on his courser for to schewe his face,
 He priked endlange² in the large place,
 Lokyng upward upon this Emelye ;
 And sche agayn him cast a frendly yghe,
 (For wommen, as for to speke in comune,
 Thay folwe alle the favour of fortune)
 And was alle his in cheer, and in his hert.
 Out of the ground a fyr infernal stert,
 From Pluto send, at the request of Saturne,
 For which his hors for feere gan to turne,
 And leep asyde, and foundred as he leep ;
 And or that Arcyte may take keep,
 He pight him on the pomel of his heed,
 That in that place he lay as he were deed,
 His brest to-broken with his sadil bowe.
 As blak he lay as eny col or crowe,
 So was the blood y-ronne in his face.
 Anon he was y-born out of the place
 With herte sore, to Theseus paleys.
 Tho was he corven³ out of his harneys,
 And in a bed y-brought ful fair and blyve,
 For yit he was in memory and on lyve,
 And alway cryeng after Emelye.
 Duk Theseus, and al his companye,
 Is comen hom to Athenes his cité,
 With alle blys and great solempnité.
 Al be it that this aventure was falle,
He nolde nought discomforten hem alle.
 Men seyde eek, that Arcita schuld nought dye,
 He schal be helyd of his maladye.
 And of another thing they were as fayn,
 That of hem alle ther was noon y-slayn,

¹ *What* a miracle.

² A feat of the manége, used for display. By spurring a horse on one side, and at the same time holding him tight with a severe bit, he is made to curvet, or advance end-long in short bounds.

³ Cut out of his armour, *i. e.*, the laces which held it together were cut for greater expedition.

Al were they sore hurt, and namely oon,
 That with a spere was thirled his brest boon.
 To other woundes, and to broken armes,
 Some hadde salve, and some hadde charmes,
 Fermacyes of herbes, and eek save¹
 They dronken, for they wolde here lyves have.
 For which this noble duk, as he wel can,
 Comforteth and honoureth every man,
 And made revel al the lange night,
 Unto the straunge lordes, as was right.
 Ne ther was holden to discomfytyng.
 But as a justes or as a turneyng;
 For sothly ther was no discomfiture,
 For fallynge is but an adventure.
 Ne to be lad with fors unto the stake
 Unyolden, and with twenty knyghtes take,
 A person allone, withouten moo,
 And rent forth by arme, foot, and too,
 And eke his steede dryven forth with staves,
 With footemen, bothe yemen and eke knaves,
 It was aretted him no vylonye,²
 Ne no maner man heldn it no cowardye.
 For which Theseus lowd anon leet crie,
 To stynten al rancour and al envye,
 The gree as wel on o syde as on other,
 And every side lik, as otheres brother;
 And gaf hem giftes after here degré,
 And fully heeld a feste dayes thre;³

¹ *Sage*, or *salvia*, was considered a sovereign remedy in the middle ages, whence the proverb of the school of Salerno—

‘Cur moriatur homo,
Dum *salvia* crescit in horto.’

² See *ante*, p. 107, note 1.

³ Mr. Wright, in a note upon the place, says, that three days were the usual duration of a feast in the middle ages, and quotes from EDDIUS, *Vit. S. Wilf.* c. 17, who, when he consecrated his church at Ripon, held *magnum convivium trium dierum*.

And conveyed the knightes worthily
 Out of his toun a journee¹ largely.
 And hom went every man the righte way.
 Ther was no more, but 'Farwel, have good day!
 Of this batayl I wol no more endite,
 But speke of Palamon and of Arcyte.

Swelleth the brest of Arcyte, and the sore
 Encresceth at his herte more and more.
 The clothred blood, for eny leche-craft,
 Corruppith, and is in his bouk i-laft,
 That nother veyne blood, ne ventusyng,
 Ne drynk of herbes may ben his helpyng.
 The vertu expulsif, or animal,
 Fro thilke vertu cleped natural,
 Ne may the venym voyde, ne expelle.
 The pypes of his lounes gan to swelle,
 And every lacerte in his brest adoun
 Is schent with venym and corrupcioun.
 Him gayneth nother, for to get his lyf,
 Vomyt up-ward, ne doun-ward laxatif;
 Al is to-broken thilke regioun;
 Nature hath now no dominacioun.
 And certeynly wher natur will not wirche,
 Farwel phisik; go bere the man to chirche.
 This al and som, that Arcyte moste dye.²
 For which he sendeth after Emelye,
 And Palamon, that was his cosyn deere.
 Than seyde he thus, as ye schul after heere.

'Naught may the woful spirit in myn herte
 Declare a poynt of my sorwes smerte
 To you, my lady, that I love most;
 But I byquethe the service of my gost
 To you aboven every creature,
 Syn that my lyf may no lenger dure.

¹ A day's journey.

² Tyrwhitt reads,—This is all and some; it means, this is the short and long of it, that Arcyte must die.

Allas, the woo! alas, the peynes stronge,
That I for you have suffred, and so longe!
Allas, the deth! alas, myn Emelye!
Allas, departyng of our companye!
Allas, myn hertes queen! alas, my wyf!
Myn hertes lady, ender of my lyf!
What is this world? what asken men to have?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave
Allone withouten eny companye.
Farwel, my swete: farwel, myn Emelye!
And softe take me in your armes tweye,
For love of God, and herkneth what I seye.
I have heer with my cosyn Palamon
Had stryf and rancour many a day i-gon,
For love of yow, and eek for jelousie.
And Jupiter so wis my sowle gye,
To speken of a servaunt proprely,
With alle circumstaunces trewely,
That is to seyn, truthe, honour, and knighthede,
Wysdom, humblesse, astaat, and by kynrede,
Fredam, and al that longeth to that art,
So Jupiter have of my soule part,
As in this world right now ne know I non
So worthy to be loved as Palamon,
That serveth you, and wol do al his lyf.
And if that ye schul ever be a wyf,
Forget not Palamon, that gentil man.'
And with that word his speche faile gan;
For fro his herte up to his brest was come
The cold of deth, that him had overcome.
And yet moreover in his armes twoo
The vital strength is lost, and al agoo.
Only the intellect, withouten more,
That dwelled in his herte sik and sore,
Gan fayle, when the herte felte death,
Duskyng his eyghen two, and fayled breth.
But on his lady yit he cast his ye;
His laste word was, ' Mercy, Emelye!'

His spiryt chaunged was, and wente ther,
 As I cam never, I can nat tellen wher.
 Therefore I stynte, I nam no dyvynistre;¹
 Of soules fynde I not in this registre,
 Ne me list nat thopynyouns to telle
 Of hem, though that thei wyten wher they dwelle.
 Arcyte is cold, ther Mars his soule gye;
 Now wol I speke forth of Emelye.

Shright Emely, and howled Palamon,
 And Theseus his sustir took anon
 Swownyng, and bar hir fro the corps away.
 What helpeth it to tarye forth the day,
 To telle how sche weep bothe eve and morwe?
 For in swich caas wommen can have such sorwe,
 Whan that here housbonds ben from hem ago,
 That for the more part they sorwen so,
 Or elles fallen in such maladye,
 That atte laste certeynly they dye.²
 Infynyt been the sorwes and the teeres
 Of olde folk, and folk of tender yeeres;
 So gret a wepyng was ther noon certayn,
 Whan Ector was i-brought, al freissh i-slayn,
 As that ther was for deth of this Theban;
 For sorwe of him ther weepeth bothe child and
 man

At Troye, alas! the pité that was there,
 Cracchyng of cheekes, rending eek of here.
 'Why woldist thou be deed,' this wommen crye,
 'And haddest gold ynowgh, and Emelye?'³
 No man mighte glade Theseus,
 Savyng his olde fader Egeus,

¹ See introduction to this tale.

² Ironical.

³ This custom of expostulating with the dead and enumerating all the advantages they have left is still common at funerals of the lower orders in Ireland. The words, varied according to the circumstances of the person, are sung to a plaintive wailing tune, called a *keen*, by women hired for the purpose, who are called *keeners*. Specimens of these *keens* are to be found in Crofton Croker's *Irish Ballads*.

That knew this worldes transmutacioun,
As he hadde seen it torne up and down,
Joye after woo, and woo aftir gladnesse:
And schewed him ensample and likenesse.

‘ Right as their deyde never man,’ quod he,
‘ That he ne lyved in erthe in som degree,
Yit ther ne lyvede never man,’ he seyde,
‘ In al this world, that som tyme he ne deyde.
This world nys but a thurghfare ful of woo,
And we ben pilgryms, passyng to and froo;
Deth is an ende of every worldly sore.’
And over al this yit seide he moehil more
To this effect, ful wysly to enhort
The peple, that they schulde him reecomforte.

Duk Theseus, with al his busy cure,
Cast busily wher that the sepulture
Of good Areyte may best y-maked be,
And eek most honorable in his degré.
And atte last he took conelusioun,
That ther as first Areite and Palamon
Hadden for love the batail hem bytwene,
That in the selve grove, soote and greene,
Ther as he hadde his amorous desires,
His compleynt, and for love his hootte fyres,
He wolde make a fyr, in which thoffice
Of funeral he might al aecompliee;
And leet comaunde anon to hakke and hewe
The okes old, and lay hem on a rewe
In eulpouns well arrayed for to brenne.
His officers with swifte foot they renne,
And ryde anon at his comaundement.
And after this, Theseus hath i-sent
After a beer, and it al overspradde
With eloth of golde, the richest that he hadde.
And of the same sute he elad Areyte;
Upon his hondes were his gloves white;
Eke on his heed a eroune of laurer grene;
And in his hond a swerd ful bright and kene.

He leyde him bare the visage on the beere,¹
 Therwith he weep that pité was to heere.
 And for the poeple schulde see him alle,
 Whan it was day he brought hem to the halle,
 That roreth of the cry and of the soun.
 Tho cam this woful Theban Palamoun,
 With flotery berd, and ruggy asschy heeres,
 In clothis blak, y-dropped al with teeres,
 And, passyng other, of wepyng Emelye,
 The rewfullest of al the companye.
 And in as moche as the service schulde be
 The more nobul and riche in his degré,
 Duk Theseus leet forth thre steedes bryng,
 That trapped were in steel al gliteryng,
 And covered with armes of dan Arcyte.
 Upon the steedes, that weren grete and white,
 Ther seeten folk, of which oon bar his scheeld,
 Another his spere up in his hondes heeld;
 The thridde bar with him his bowe Turkeys,
 Of brend gold was the caas and eek the herneys;
 And riden forth a paas with sorwful chere
 Toward the grove, as ye schul after heere.
 The nobles of the Grekes that ther were
 Upon here schuldres carieden the beere,
 With slak paas, and eyhen reed and wete,
 Thurghout the cité, by the maister streete,
 That sprad was al with blak, and wonder hye
 Right of the same is al the stret i-wrye.
 Upon the right hond went olde Egeus,
 And on that other syde duk Theseus,

¹ Tyrwhitt observes on this line—‘If this expression were in Milton, the critics would not fail to call it an *elegant Grecism*. In Chaucer we can only hope that it may be allowed to be an *elegant Anglicism*. Froissart says, that the corpse of Edward III. was carried ‘tout au long de la cité de Londres, à viaire decouvert, jusques à Westmonstier, vol. i. c. 326. This appears to have been the general custom. It is alluded to in the *Friar of Orders Grey*, in Percy’s *Reliques*:—

‘Here bore him, bare-faced on his bier,
 Six proper youths and tall.’

With vessels in here hand of gold wel fyn,
 As ful of hony, mylk, and blood, and wyn;
 Elke Palamon, with a gret companye;
 And after that com woful Emelye,
 With fyr in hond, as was at that time the gyse,¹
 To do thoffice of funeral servise.

Heygh labour, and ful gret apparailynge
 Was at the service and at the fyr makynge,
 That with his grene top the heven raughte,
 And twenty fadme of brede tharme straughte;
 This is to seyn, the boowes were so brode,
 Of stree first was ther leyd ful many a loode.
 But how the fyr was makyd up on highte,
 And eek the names how the trees highte,
 As ook, fyr, birch, asp, aldir, holm, popler,
 Wilw, elm, plane, assch, box, chesteyn, lynde, laurer
 Mapul, thorn, beech, hasil, ew, wyppyltre,
 How they weren felde, schal nought be told for me
 Ne how the goddes ronnen up and doun,
 Disheryt of here habitacioun,
 In which they whilom woned in rest and pees,
 Nymphes, Faunes, and Amadryes;
 Ne how the beestes and the briddes alle
 Fledden for feere, whan the woode was falle;
 Ne how the ground agast was of the light,
 That was nought wont to see no sonne bright;
 Ne how the fyr was couchid first with stree,
 And thanne with drye stykkes cloven in three,
 And thanne with grene woode and spicerie,
 And thanne with cloth of gold and with perry;
 And gerlandes hangyng with ful many a flour,
 The myrre, thensens with al so gret odour;
 Ne how Arcyte lay among al this,
 Ne what richesse aboute his body is;
 Ne how that Emely, as was the gyse,
 Putt in the fyr of funeral servise;

¹ The whole description of the funeral and games is taken from the sixth book of the *Thebais*.

Ne how she swowned when sche made the fyre,
 Ne what sche spak, ne what was hire desire ;
 Ne what jewels men in the fyr tho cast,
 Whan that the fyr was gret and brente fast ;
 Ne how sum caste her scheeld, and summe her spere,
 And of here vestimentz, which that they were,
 And cuppes ful of wyn, and mylk, and blood,
 Unto the fyr, that brent as it were wood ;
 Ne how the Grekes with an huge route
 Thre tymes ryden al the fyr aboute
 Upon the lefte hond, with an heih schoutyng,
 And thries with here speres clateryng ;
 And thries how the ladyes gan to crye ;
 Ne how that lad was home-ward Emelye ;
 Ne how Arcyte is brent to aschen colde ;
 Ne how the liche-wake¹ was y-holde
 Al thilke night, ne how the Grekes pleye
 The wake-pleyes, kepe I nat to seye ;
 Who wrastleth best naked, with oyle enoynt,
 Ne who that bar him best in no disjoynt.
 I wol not telle eek how they ben goon
 Hom til Athenes whan the pley is doon.
 But schortly to the poynt now wol I wende,
 And maken of my longe tale an ende.

By proces and by lengthe of certeyn yeres
 Al styntyd is the mornyng and the teeres
 Of alle Grekys, by oon general assent.
 Than semed me ther was a parlement

¹ From the Saxon *lic*, a corpse, like the German *leich*, and wake, a vigil. The custom of watching with dead bodies is very ancient in this country, and lingered till lately among the Roman Catholics in the North. See, in Scott's *Border Minstrelsy*, a curious rhyme sung on such occasions. The 'wake-pleyes,' mentioned two lines lower down, may still be traced in the games usual at wakes among the Irish peasantry. These, as well as our own custom of laying out in state the bodies of persons of distinction, are no doubt derived from the Pagan funeral ceremonies, which the rulers of the early church, in deference to the inveterate prejudices of their heathen converts, permitted to remain, and endeavoured to christianize. [Compare *lich-gate*; also *Lichfield*.]

At Athenes, on a certeyn poynt and cas;
 Among the whiche poyntes spoken was
 To han with certeyn contrees alliaunce,
 And have fully of Thebans obeissance.
 For which this noble Theseus anon
 Let senden after gentil Palamon,
 Unwist of him what was the cause and why;
 But in his blake clothes sorwfully
 He cam at his comaundement on hye.
 Tho sente Theseus for Emelye.
 Whan they were sette, and hussht was al the place,
 And Theseus abyden hadde a space
 Or eny word cam fro his wyse brest,
 His eyen set he ther as was his lest,
 And with a sad visage he syked stille,
 And after that right thus he seide his wille.

‘The firste moevere of the cause above,
 Whan he first made the fayre cheyne of love,¹
 Gret was theeffect, and heigh was his entente;
 Wel wist he why, and what therof he mente;
 For with that faire cheyne of love he bond
 The fyr, the watir, the eyr, and eek the lond
 In certeyn boundes, that they may not flee;
 That same prynce and moevere eek,’ quod he,
 ‘Hath stabled, in this wrecched world adoun,
 Certeyn dayes and duracioun
 To alle that er engendrid in this place,
 Over the which day they may nat pace,
 Al mowe they yit wel here dayes abregge;
 Ther needeth non auctorité tallegge;
 For it is preved by experience,
 But that me lust declare my sentence.

¹ This sublime philosophy is derived from Boethius, *De Consolatione Phil.* ii. met. 8:—

‘Hanc rerum seriem ligat,
 Terras ac pelagus regens,
 Et cœlo imperitans, amor.’

Here Platonism is elevated by Christianity.

Than may men wel by this ordre discerne,
 That thilke moevere stabul is and eterne.
 Wel may men knowe, but it be a fool,
 That every partye dyryveth from his hool.
 For nature hath nat take his bygynnyng
 Of no partye ne cantel of a thing,
 But of a thing that parfyt is and stable,
 Descendyng so, til it be corumpable.
 And therfore of his wyse purveaunce
 He hath so wel biset his ordenaunce,
 That spices¹ of thinges and progressiouns
 Schullen endure by successiouns,
 And nat eterne be withoute lye :
 This maistow understand and se at ye.²

‘Lo the ook,³ that hath so long norisschyng
 Fro tyme that it gynneth first to spring,
 And hath so long a lyf, as we may see,
 Yet atte laste wasted is the tree.

‘Considereth eek, how that the harde stoon
 Under oure foot, on which we trede and goon,
 Yit wasteth it, as it lith by the weye.
 The brode ryver som tyme wexeth dreye.
 The grete townes see we wane and wende.
 Then may I see that al thing hath an ende.

‘Of man and womman se we wel also,
 That wendeth in oon of this termes two.
 That is to seyn, in youthe or elles in age,
 He moot ben deed, the kyng as schal a page ;
 Sum in his bed, som in the deepe see,
 Som in the large feeld, as men may se.
 Ther helpeth naught, al goth thilke weye.
 Thanne may I see wel that al thing schal deye.

¹ Species.

² See at eye, by experience.

³ This passage is taken from the *Theseida*. It is in what Chaucer calls ‘high style,’ and is in accordance with the mediæval taste for apologues, ridiculed by Shakespeare in Falstaff’s personation of Henry IV. ‘For though the camomille, the more it is trodden on, the more it groweth, &c.’—*Henry IV.*, Part I., Act ii.

What maketh this but Jubiter the kyng?
The which is prynce and cause of alle thing,
Converting al unto his propre wille,
From which he is dereyned, soth to telle.
And here agayn no creature on lyve
Of no degré avayleth for to stryve.

‘Than is it wisdom, as thenketh me,
To maken vertu of necessité,
And take it wel, that we may nat eschewe,
And namely that that to us alle is dewe.
And who so gruccheth aught, he doth folye,
And rebel is to him that al may gye.
And certeynly a man hath most honour
To deyen in his excellence and flour,
Whan he is siker of his goode name.
Than hath he doon his freend, ne him, no schame
And glader ought his freend ben of his deth,
Whan with honour is yolden up the breth,
Thanne whan his name appelled is for age;
For al forgotten is his vasselage.

Thanne is it best, as for a worthi fame,
To dye whan a man is best of name.
The contrary of al this is wilfulnesse.
Why grucchen we? why have we hevynesse,
That good Arcyte, of chyvalry the flour,
Departed is, with worschip and honour
Out of this foule prisoun of this lyf?
Why gruccheth heer his cosyn and his wyf
Of his welfare, that loven him so wel?
Can he hem thank? nay, God woot, never a del,
That bothe his soule and eek himself offende,
And yet they may here lustes nat amende.

‘What may I conclude of this longe serye,
But afir wo I rede us to be merye,
And thanke Jubiter of al his grace?
And or that we departe fro this place,
I rede that we make, of sorwes two,
O parfyt joye lastyng ever mo :

And loketh now wher most sorwe is her-inne,
Ther wol we first amenden and bygynne.

‘Sustyr,’ quod he, ‘this is my ful assent,
With all thavys heer of my parlement,
That gentil Palamon, your owne knight,
That serveth yow with herte, will, and might,
And ever hath doon, syn fyrst tyme ye him knewe,
That ye schul of your grace upon him rewe,
And take him for your housbond and for lord :
Lene me youre hand, for this is oure acord.
Let see now of your wommanly pité.
He is a kynges brothir sone, pardee ;
And though he were a pore bachiller,¹
Syn he hath served you so many a yeer,
And had for you so gret adversité,
It moste be considered, trusteth me.
For gentil mercy aughte passe right.’
Than seyde he thus to Palamon ful right ;
‘I trowe ther needeth litel sermonyng
To make you assente to this thing.
Com neer, and tak your lady by the hond.’
Bitwix hem was i-maad anon the bond,
That highte matrimoyn or mariage,
By alle the counseil of the baronage.
And thus with blys and eek with melodye
Hath Palamon i-wedded Emelye.
And God, that al this wyde world hath wrought,
Send him his love, that hath it deere i-bought.
For now is Palamon in al his wele,
Lyvyng in blisse, richesse, and in hele,
And Emelye him loveth so tendirly,
And he hir serveth al so gentilly,
That never was ther wordes hem bitweene
Of jelousy, ne of non othir tene.
Thus endeth Palamon and Emelye ;
And God save al this fayre companye !

¹ Bachelor, the lowest rank of knighthood.

THE PROLOGUE OF THE MYLLER.

WHAN that the Knight had thus his tale i-told,
 In al the route nas ther yong ne old,
 That he ne seyde it was a noble story,
 And worthi to be drawn to memory;
 And namely the gentils everichoon.
 Our Host tho lowh and swoor, 'So moot I goon,
 This goth right wel; unboked is the male;¹
 Let se now who schal telle another tale;
 For trewely this game is wel bygonne.
 Now telleth ye, sir Monk, if that ye konne
 Somwhat, to quyte with the knightes tale.'
 The Myller that for drunken was al pale,²
 So that unnethe upon his hors he sat,
 He wold avale nowther hood ne hat,
 Ne abyde no man for his curtesye,
 But in Pilates³ voys he gan to crye,

¹ Apparently a proverbial expression derived from the market, and meaning, literally, that the malc, or bale of goods, is opened and the ware exposed for the customers' inspection; metaphorically, that the business is well begun.

² All pale for drunkenness. It does not seem here the German particle *vertrunken*, but a preposition meaning *à force de*, for very drunkenness. There are several examples: see two, 'for old' and 'for blak,' *ante*, p. 158. Others occur elsewhere.

³ In the gruff, hoarse voice assumed by the actors who played the character of Pilate in the popular mysteries of the Passion. The 'mysteries' or 'miracles,' founded on Scripture, or the Lives of the Christian Martyrs, were often performed by ecclesiastics in churches, for the purpose of instructing the unlearned people in the substance of Scripture history, or exciting them to zeal by the force of example. So early as the time of William I., Matt. Paris relates that Geoffrey, a learned Norman, composed a play on the martyrdom of St. Catherine. Mr. Price, the learned editor of Warton, says, that the earliest miracle play extant in English is *Our Saviour's Descent into Hell*, in MS. of the time of Edward II. There is this curious passage in Lambard's *Topographical Dictionary*, written about the year 1570. 'In the dayes of ceremonial religion, they used at Wytney (in Oxfordshire) to set fourthe yearly, in manner of a shew or interlude, the Resurrection of our Lord, &c. . . . The like to which I myselfe, being then a childe, once sawe in Poule's Church in London, at a feast of Whitsuntide; where the comynge down of the Holy Gost was set forthe by a white pigeon, that was let to fly out of a hole that yet is to be sene in the mydst of the rooffe of the greate ile,' &c. See also the series

And swor by armes and by blood and bones,
 'I can a noble tale for the noones,
 With which I wol now quyte the knightes tale.'
 Oure Hoost saw wel how dronke he was of ale,
 And seyde, 'Robyn, abyde, my leve brother,
 Som bettre man schal telle first another;
 Abyd, and let us worken thriftyly.'
 'By Goddes soule!' quod he, 'that wol nat I,
 For I wol speke, or elles go my way.'
 Oure Host answerd, 'Tel on, a devel way!
 Thou art a fool; thy witt is overcome.'

'Now herkneþ,' quod this Myller, 'al and some;
 But first I make a protestacioun,
 That I am dronke, I knowe wel by my soun;
 And therfore if that I mys-speke or seye,
 Wyte it the ale of Southwerk, I you preye;
 For I wol telle a legende and a lyf
 Bothe of a carpenter and of his wyf,
 How that the clerk hath set the wrightes cappe.'

The Reve answered and seyde, 'Stynt thi clappe.
 Let be thy lewed drunken harlottrye.
 It is a synne, and eek a greet folye
 To apeyren eny man, or him defame,
 And eek to brynge wyves in ylle name.
 Thou mayst ynowgh of other thinges seyn.'
 This dronken Miller spak ful sone ageyn,
 And seyde, 'Leeve brother Osewold,
 Who hath no wyf, he is no cokewold.'

of plays exhibited at Chester, in 1327, at the expense of the different trading companies, of which an edition was edited by Mr. Wright for the Shakspeare Society; also *The Towneley and Coventry Mysteries*. It appears from Strype's *Grindal*, p. 82, that this practice of acting plays in churches lingered even after the Reformation, except that profane stories had taken the place of religious. The celebrated ceremonies of the Holy Week in the Sistine Chapel, to which the English abroad always flock in such numbers, are something of the same character. The events of the Passion are read from one of the Evangelists in a simple but very touching chaunt, by different divisions of the choir, one division taking the words of our Lord, another of the Scribes and Pharisees, another of the people, and a fourth reading the narrative.

But I seye not therfore that thou art oon,
 Ther been ful goode wyves many oon.
 And ever a thousand goode agayns oon badde ;
 That knowest thou wel thyself, but if thou madde.¹
 Why art thou angry with my tale now?
 I have a wyf, pardé! as well as thow,
 Yet nolde I, for the oxen in my plough,
 Take upon me more than ynough;
 Though that thou deme thiself that thou be oon,²
 I wol bileeve wel that I am noon.
 An housbond schal not be inquisityf
 Of Goddes pryveté, ne of his wyf.
 So that he may fynde Goddes foysoun there,
 Of the remenaunt needeth nought enquire.
 What schuld I seye, but that this proud Myllere
 He nolde his wordes for no man forbere,
 But tolde his cherlich tale in his manere.
 Me athinketh, that I schal reherce it heere;
 And therfor every gentil wight I preye,
 For Goddes love, as deme nat that I seye,
 Of yvel entent, but for I moot reherse
 Here wordes alle, al be they better or werse,
 Or elles falsen som of my mateere.³
 And therfor who so list it nat to heere,
 Turne over the leef, and cheese another tale ;
 For he schal fynde ynowe bothe gret and smale,
 Of storial thing that toucheth gentillesse,
 And eek moralité, and holynesse.⁴
 Blameth nat me, if that ye cheese amys.
 The Miller is a cherl, ye know wel this ;

¹ *Madde* is here a verb, meaning to be going mad. Tyrwhitt in his text omits these two lines, but gives them in his notes in a less correct form. The Miller probably meant this compliment ironically.

² There is much humour in the Miller's taking it for granted that the reason Oswald objects to his tale, even before he has heard it, is because he thinks it must needs apply to his own case.

³ See *ante*, p. 107, note 2.

⁴ It may be mentioned, as a specimen of the errors with which even the best MSS. abound, that in the Harleian MS. this line is written—

‘And eek more ryalté and holinesse’

So was the Reeve, and othir many mo,
And harlotry they tolden bothe two.
Avyseth you, and put me out of blame ;
And men schulde nat make ɔrnest of game.

THE MILLERES TALE.

[THE origin of this story has not been ascertained. Mr. Wright thinks that it is probably founded upon a *fabliau*, current in Chaucer's time, but now either lost or buried among the MSS. of some public library ; an opinion to which Tyrwhitt also inclines. For the licentiousness of this and some of the other tales, no valid excuse can be offered. The necessities of the plan, and the manners of the age, are sometimes urged in extenuation, and the plea may be allowed to some extent in mitigation of judgment ; but even Chaucer himself felt that an apology was due, and has attempted one, which, as has been shown before, is, in fact, no apology at all. In his treatment of the subject, the poet has introduced the various incidents and characters with great comic power and art. No circumstance is omitted which could add grotesqueness to the general effect. The contrast between Nicholas's outward manners and real pursuits ; the incongruity between the hymn he chooses to sing and the plan he is concocting ; his oracular mode of declaring his vision ; the carpenter's excessive distress at the prospect of losing his Alison, who is all the time plotting against his honour : his complacency in the superiority of his own common sense over the clerk's book-learning ; Absolon's devices to make himself agreeable ; his preparations for the hoped-for accolade, and his sudden disgust for his former objects of pursuit, are all thrown in with the hand of a master in this kind of broad humour. The antiquarian and historical aspects of this tale are not without interest as illustrating the manners of the times. ' In the description of the young wife of our philosopher's host,' says Warton, ' there is great elegance, with a mixture of burlesque allusions ; not to mention the curiosity of a

female portrait drawn with so much exactness at such a distance of time.' Here, too, the poet exhibits that growing feeling of hostility to the clergy which prompted the writers of the latter part of the middle ages to rejoice in placing them and the service of the Church in a ludicrous point of view; for Absolon, being a parish clerk, was of course, in accordance with the custom of the primitive and mediæval churches, in minor orders.]

WHILOM ther was dwellyng at Oxenford
 A riche gnof,¹ that gestes heeld to boorde,²
 And of his craft he was a carpenter.
 With him ther was dwellyng a pore scoler,
 Had lerned art, but al his fantasye
 Was torned for to lerne astrologye,
 And cowde a certeyn of conclusiouns
 To deme by interrogaciouns,
 If that men axed him in certeyn houres,
 Whan that men schuld han drougt or ellys schoures,
 Or if men axed him what schulde bifalle
 Of everyting, I may nought reken hem alle.
 This clerk was cleped heende Nicholas;
 Of derne love he cowde and of solas;
 And therwith he was sleigh and ful privé,
 And lik a mayden meke for to se.
 A chambir had he in that hostillerye³
 Alone, withouten eny compaignye,
 Ful fetisly i-dight with herbes soote,
 And he himself as swete as is the roote
 Of lokorys, or eny cetewale.
 His almagest⁴, and bookes gret and smale,

¹ An example of the way in which the final *n* of the indefinite article is made the agent of changes in words; thus, a *gnof* becomes an oaf; a *nedder*, an adder; a *nowch*, an ouch; *an eft*, a newt; &c.

² It appears from this passage that the re-established system of permitting students at the University to live in private lodgings was the ancient practice. The abuses to which it led, as exemplified in the tale, were probably the cause of its discontinuance.

³ The Harl. MS. reads *in his hostillerye*. It may be observed, that it was usual in the University for two or more students to have one room.—W.

⁴ The Arabs, from whom the Western nations derived a great part

His astrylabe,¹ longyng for his art,
 His augrym stooness,² leyen faire apart
 On schelves couched at his beddes heed,
 His presse i-covered with a faldyng reed.
 And all above ther lay a gay sawtrye,
 On which he made a-nightes melodye,
 So swetely, that al the chambur rang;
 And *Angelus ad virginem*³ he sang.
 And after that he sang the kynges note;⁴
 Ful often blissed was his mery throte,
 And thus this sweete clerk his tyme spente,
 After his frendes fyndyng and his rente.⁵

of their early knowledge of science (see HALLAM, *Middle Ages*, c. i., 77), called the Μεγάλη Σύνταξις of Ptolemy *Almegisthi*, from *al*, Arabic for *the*, and μέγιστη, *greatest*. It was the handbook of astrology at that time.

¹ An instrument for taking the sun's altitude, and making other astronomical observations. Chaucer has left a treatise on its use, of which the introduction, addressed to his 'litel son Louis,' is a charming example of the poet's familiar prose style. In Speght's time this treatise was still considered the best authority on the branch of astronomy of which it treats.

² *Augrim* is a corruption of *algorithm*, the Arabic for *numeration*. Augrim stones were the counters or pebbles anciently used to facilitate calculations, which last word is derived from *calculus*, a pebble.

³ On the Sundays in Advent and Feast of the Annunciation, the antiphons and responses, appointed to be sung in the processions and other parts of the Roman service, are taken from the evangelical history of the appearance of the Angel Gabriel to the blessed Virgin, beginning, 'Missus est Gabriel angelus ad virginem.' This was perhaps the song intended in the text. But it is more probably a metrical hymn to be found only in the Salisbury or some other local Breviary.

⁴ All the commentators acknowledge themselves unable to point out the piece of music intended by 'the kynges note.' Warton supposes it to mean a *chant royal*, or *ballad royal*,—that is, as Pasquer describes it, 'a song in honour of God, the holy Virgin, or any other argument of dignity.' Hawkins and Burney cite the passage as illustrative of the cultivation of music in the 14th century. The former passes over 'the kynges note' without observation; the latter has the following:—'The *chant royal* was an appellation given to poems on lofty subjects in the early times of French poetry.'—*His. of Mus.*, ii., 375. This loose explanation increases the obscurity. It is more likely that the *chant royal* was a *strain of music*, like the 'Cantus Peregrinus' of Gregorian Psalmody, or (of later date) our 'Grand Chant.'

⁵ Living upon what his friends found him, and his own income.

This carpenter had weddid newe a wyf,
 Which that he loved more than his lyf;
 Of eyghteteene yeer sche was of age,
 Gelous he was, and heeld hir narwe in cage,
 For sche was wild and yong, and he was old,
 And demed himself belik a cokewold,
 He knew nat Catoun,¹ for his wit was rude,
 That bad man schulde wedde his similitude.
 Men schulde wedde aftir here astaat,
 For eelde and youthe ben often at debaat.
 But syn that he was brought into the snare,
 He moste endure, as othere doon, his care.

Fair was the yonge wyf, and therwithal
 As eny wesil hir body gent and smal.
 A seynt sche wered, barred al of silk;
 A barm-cloth² eek as whit as morne mylk
 Upon hir lendes, ful of many a gore.
 Whit was hir smok, and browdid al byfore
 And eek byhynde on hir coler aboute,
 Of cole-blak silk, withinne and eek withoute.
 The tapes of hir white voluper
 Weren of the same sute of hire coler;
 Hir filet brood of silk y-set ful heye.
 And certeynly sche hadd a licorous eyghe;
 Ful smal y-pulled weren hir browes two,
 And tho were bent, as blak as a slo.
 Sche was wel more blisful on to see
 Than is the newe perjonette tree;

¹ Tyrwhitt says that the maxim here ascribed to Caton, the French form of Cato, is to be found in a supplement to the moral distichs entitled *Facetus, inter Auctores octo Morales*, Lugdun. 1528, iii.

‘Duc tibi prole parem sponsam moresque venustam,
 Si cum pace velis vitam deducere justam.’

² This word is derived from the Saxon *bearm*, the lap, and is therefore interpreted in the glossaries *an apron*; but it seems rather to mean a *skirt* in general, as being worn ‘upon her lendes,’ and made to fit her person with ‘many a gore.’ The *seynt* means not only the girdle, but the *bodice*, like the Latin *zona*; and so the whole of her dress is accounted for.

And softer than the wol is of a wethir.
 And by hir gurdil hyng a purs of lethir,
 Tassid with silk, and perled¹ with latoun.
 In al this world to seken up and doun
 There nys no man so wys, that couthe thenche
 So gay a popillot, or such a wenche.
 For brighter was the schynyng of hir hewe,
 Than in the Tour the noble i-forged newe.²
 But of hir song, it was as lowde and yerne
 As eny swalwe chiteryng on a berne.
 Therto sche cowde skippe, and make game,
 As eny kyde or calf folwyng his dame.
 Hir mouth was sweete as bragat is or meth,
 Or hoord of apples, layd in hay or heth.
 Wynsyng sche was, as is a joly colt;
 Long as a mast, and upright as a bolt.³
 A broch sche bar upon hir loue coleer,
 As brod as is the bos of a bocleer.
 Hir schos were laced on hir legges heyghe;
 Sche was a primerole, a piggesneyghe,⁴
 For eny lord have liggyng in his bedde,
 Or yet for eny good yeman to wedde.
 Now sir, and eft sir, so bifel the cas,
 That on a day this heende Nicholas

¹ Ornamented with knobs of latten, like pearls.

² The gold noble of this period was a very beautiful coin: specimens are engraved in Ruding's *Annals of the Coinage*. It was coined in the Tower of London, the place of the principal London mint.—W.

³ These two lines are quoted by Dryden as perfect specimens of the heroic metre, and it is difficult to believe that Chaucer could have produced them, and many others as perfect, by chance, as the advocates of the rhythmical theory must necessarily suppose.

⁴ A term of endearment, supposed by Tyrwhitt to mean *pig's eye*, like the Latin *ocellus*, the eyes of the pig being very small. So Doll Tearsheet, intending to be very tender, calls Falstaff, 'Thou whoreson little, tidy Bartholomew boar-pig.' *Henry IV.*, Act ii. sc. 4. Shadwell (*Plays*, vol. i. 357) uses in this sense, not only the word *pigsney*, but *birdsney*. [*Pigsney* means 'pig's eye;' so also *birdsney* may be either 'bird's eye' or 'bird's egg,' according to the context. Not only is the form *ny* for *eye* found, but *nynon* for *eyes*; see Halliwell's *Dictionary*.—W. W. S.]

Fil with this yonge wyf to rage and pleye
 Whil that hir housbond was at Oseneye,¹
 As clerkes ben ful soutil and ful queynte.
 And pryvely he caught hir by the queynte.
 And seyde, 'I-wis, but if I have my wille,
 For derne love of the, lemman, I spille.'
 And heeld hir harde by the haunche boones,
 And seyde, 'Lemman, love me al at ones,
 Or I wol dye, as wisly God me save.'

And sche sprang out as doth a colt in trave:
 And with hir heed sche wried fast away,
 And seyde, 'I wol nat kisse the, by my fey!
 Why let be,' quod sche, 'lat be thou, Nicholas
 Or I wol crye out harrow and allas!
 Do wey pour handes for your curtesye!
 This Nicholas gan mercy for to crye,
 And spak so faire, and profred him so faste,
 That sche hir love him graunted atte laste,
 And swor hir oth by seynt Thomas of Kent,
 That sche wol be at his commaundement,
 Whan that sche may hir leysir wel aspye.
 'Myn housbond is so ful of jelousie,
 That but ye wayten wel, and be pryvé,
 I woot right wel I am but deed,' quod sche:
 'Ye mosten be ful derne as in this caas.'
 'Therof ne care the nought,' quod Nicholas:
 'A clerk hath litherly byset his while,
 But if he cowde a carpenter bygyle.'
 And thus they ben acorded and i-sworn
 To wayte a tyme, as I have told biforn.

Whan Nicholas had doon thus every del,
 And thakked hire aboute the lendys wel,
 He kist hir sweet, and taketh his sawtrye,
 And pleyeth fast, and maketh melodye.

¹ An abbey in the suburbs of Oxford, founded by Edward the Confessor, at the instance, as Lambarde states in his *Topographical Dictionary*, of his Queen Editha, who was directed to the place 'by the chattering of pies.'

Than fyl it thus, that to the parisch chirche
 Cristes owen workes for to wirche,¹
 This goode wyf went on an haly day;
 Hir forheed schon as bright as eny day,
 So was it waisschen, whan sche leet hir werk.

Now ther was of that chirche a parisch clerk,
 The which that was i-cleped Absolon.
 Crulle was his heer, and as the gold it schon,
 And strowted as a fan right large and brood;
 Ful streyt and evene lay his jolly schood.
 His rode was reed, his eyghen gray as goos,
 With Powles wyndowes² corven on his schoos.
 In hosen reed he went ful fetusly.
 I-clad he was ful small and propurly,
 Al in a kirtel of a fyn wachet,
 Schapen with goores in the newe get.
 And therupon he had a gay surplys,
 As whyt as is the blosme upon the rys.
 A mery child³ he was, so God me save;
 Wel couthe he lete blood, and clippe and schave,⁴
 And make a chartre of lond and acquitaunce.
 In twenty maners he coude skip and daunce,

¹ Ironical.

² Perhaps this means that his shoes were cut in squares (rather lozenges) like panes of glass. In the Cistercian statutes the monks are forbidden to wear *calceos fenestratos*.—T. Mr. Wright states that three paintings formerly existing on the walls of St. Stephen's chapel, Westminster, represented shoes of Chaucer's time, which were cut in patterns not unlike the tracery of church windows; and that it has been conjectured that the phrase *Powles windows* refers especially to the rose window of old St. Paul's, which resembled the ornament on one of some beautiful samples of ancient shoes preserved in the museum of Mr. C. Roach Smith. Mr. Wright gives cuts of these shoes in his edition of Chaucer, published by the Percy Society. Figures of such shoes are not uncommon.

³ The term *child*, as is well known ever since the publication of *Childe Harold*, was applied in the middle ages to young men. The hymn supposed to have been sung in the fire by Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego, is called, in the Book of Common Prayer, the *Song of the Three Children*. *Childe Waters*, the Child of Elle, and other examples occur in Percy's collection.

⁴ See *ante*, p. 155, note 2.

After the scole of Oxenforde¹ tho,
 And with his legges casten to and fro ;
 And pleyen songes on a small rubible ;
 Ther-to he sang som tyme a lowde quynnyble.²
 And as wel coude he pleye on a giterne.
 In al the toun nas brewhous ne taverne
 That he ne visited with his solas,
 Ther as that any gaylard tapster was.
 But soth to say he was somdel squaymous
 Of fartyng, and of speche daungerous.
 This Absolon, that jolly was and gay,
 Goth with a senser on the haly day,
 Sensing³ the wyves of the parisch fast ;
 And many a lovely look on hem he cast,
 And namely on this carpenteres wyf ;
 To loke on hire him thought a mery lyf ;
 Sche was so propre, sweete, and licorous.
 I dar wel sayn, if sche had ben a mous,

¹ See *ante*, p. 82, note 2.

² *Quynnyble* is, probably, formed from the verb *quintoire*, to play or sing a part in fifths. The extra part, above four, in the old separate part-books is called *quintus*, the next *sextus*, and so on. A *quynnyble* (or *quynible*) may, therefore, have been a fifth (generally a high tenor, or counter tenor, which seems implied by the expression 'lowde quynnyble';) and this view is supported by the word *quatrille*, which occurs in a very early treatise on descant. A *quynnyble* then means a *part* extemporized a fifth above the rest; a practice called also by the old musicians 'organizing,' much practised by boys, and consequently associated with youthfulness, a sufficient reason for the parish clerk to show off in this manner. *Rubible*, or *ribible*, (absurdly described by Speght as a gittern or fiddle,) was, no doubt, the Arabian *rebeb*, or *rebab*, rendered in Italian *rebeca*; an instrument of two strings, with a finger-board 'fretted,' and played upon by a bow; in short, a primitive violin. The *giterne*, or *cittern*, was a form of guitar, (the same word,) each string of which had a duplicate for more rapid articulation, as well as to augment the tone. It was played upon by a quill.

³ It was the custom for the clerks who carried the censers to swing them in front of the congregation, so that the perfume was diffused over the whole church. Lord Cloncurry, in his *Personal Recollections*, gives a curious illustration of the jealousy with which personal priority was regarded 'in administering the honours of the censer' even in the last century. So in the *Person's Tale* (*de superbiā*) among the different kinds of pride is reckoned the desire to 'ben encensed, or gon to the offrynge before his neghebre.'

And he a cat, he wold hir hent anoon.¹

This parisch clerk, this joly Absolon,
Hath in his herte such a love longyng,
That of no wyf ne took he noon offryng;²
For curtesy, he seyde, he wolde noon.
The moone at night ful cleer and brighte schoon,
And Absolon his giterne hath i-take,
For paramours he seyde he wold awake.
And forth he goth, jolyf and amerous,
Til he cam to the carpenteres hous,
A litel after the cok had y-crowe,
And dressed him up by a schot³ wyndowe
That was under the carpenteres wal.
He syngeth in his voys gentil and smal—

‘Now, deere lady, if thi wille be,
I praye yow that ye wol rewe on me.’

Ful wel acordyng to his gyternyng.

This carpenter awook, and herde him syng,
And spak unto his wyf, and sayde anoon,
‘What Alisoun, herestow not Absolon,

¹ This thought occurs in a less ridiculous form in the *Border Minstrelsy*, vol. iii.:—

‘O gin my love were a pickle of wheat,
And growing upon yon lily lea,
And I myself a bonny wee bird,
Awa wi’ that pickle o’ wheat I wad flee.’

² The money collected at the offertory was formerly applied partly to the maintenance of the ministers of the church (of whom Absolon was an inferior one), as appears from the verses taken from 1 Cor. ix., appointed in the Book of Common Prayer to be read at that part of the service.

³ This word occurs in the beautiful ballad of *Clerk Saunders*, in the *Border Minstrelsy*, vol. ii., in a connexion which shows that it cannot mean *shut*, as Tyrwhitt supposes:—

‘Then she has ta’en a crystal wand,
And she has stroken her troth thereon;
She has given it him out at the *shot window*,
With mony a sad sigh and heavy groan.’

A *shot window* was, therefore, probably a sort of bow window, from which the inmates might shoot any one attempting to force an entrance by the door, as Mr. Wright well observes.

That chaunteth thus under oure boures wal!¹
 And sche answered hir housbond therwithal,
 'Yis, God woot, Johan, I heere it every del.'

This passeth forth; what wil ye bet than wel?
 Fro day to day this joly Absolon
 So woweth hire, that him is wo-bigon.
 He waketh al the night and al the day,
 To kembe his lokkes brode and made him gay.
 He woweth hire by mene and by brocage,²
 And swor he wolde ben hir owne page.
 He syngeth crowyng as a nightyngale;
 And sent hire pyment, meth, and spiced ale,
 And wafres pypyng hoot out of the gleede;³
 And for sche was of toune, he profred meede.
 For som folk wol be wonne for richesse,
 And som for strokes, som for gentillesse.
 Som tyme, to schewe his lightnes and maistrye,
 He pleyeth Herod⁴ on a scaffold hye.
 But what avayleth him as in this caas?
 Sche so loveth this heende Nicholas,
 That Absolon may blowe the bukkes horn;⁵
 He ne had for al his labour but a skorn.
 And thus sche maketh Absolon hir ape,
 And al his earnest torneth to a jape.

¹ The Harl. MS. reads *boure smal*. *Boure* means primarily a chamber.

² Woos her by the mediation and intervention or brokerage of common acquaintances.

³ These were probably the French *gaufres* [which word is in fact only a corruption of the English *wafer*.—W. W. S.]. They are usually sold at fairs, and are made of a kind of batter poured into an iron instrument, which shuts up like a pair of snuffers. It is then thrust into the fire, and when it is withdrawn and opened, the *gaufre*, or wafer, is taken out and eaten, 'piping hot out of the gleede,' as here described.

⁴ This is much in character. The parish clerks always took a principal share in the representation of the mysteries, and playing the part of Herod gave Absolon an opportunity of showing himself off to advantage in the kingly character. In the years 1390 and 1409 the parish clerks of London acted plays for eight days successively at Clerkenwell, in presence of most of the nobility and gentry of the kingdom.—See WARTON, sect. xxxiv.

⁵ This, as it appears, is equivalent to the phrase 'to pipe in an ivy leaf.'

Ful soth is this proverbe, it is no lye,
 Men seyn right thus alway, the ney slye
 Maketh the ferre leef to be loth.¹
 For though that Absolon be wood or wroth,
 Bycause that he fer was from here sight,
 This Nicholas hath stonden in his light.
 Now bere the wel, thou heende Nicholas,
 For Absolon may wayle and synge allas.

And so bifelle it on a Satyrday
 This carpenter was gon to Osenay,
 And heende Nicholas and Alisoun
 Acordid ben to this conclusioun,
 That Nicholas schal schapen hem a wyle
 This sely jelous housbond to begyle;
 And if so were this game wente aright,
 Sche schulde slepe in his arm al night,
 For this was hire desir and his also.
 And right anoon, withouten wordes mo,
 This Nicholas no lenger wold he tarye,
 But doth ful softe into his chambur carye
 Both mete and drynke for a day or tweye.
 And to hir housbond bad hir for to seye,
 If that he axed after Nicholas,
 Sche schulde saye, sche wiste nat wher he was;
 Of al that day sche saw him nat with eye;
 Sche trowed he were falle in som maladye,
 For no cry that hir mayden cowde him calle
 He nolde answeere, for nought that may bifalle.

Thus passeth forth al that ilke Satyrday,
 That Nicholas stille in his chambre lay,
 And eet, and drank, and dede what him leste
 Til Soneday the sonne was gon to reste.

This sely carpenter hath gret mervaille
 Of Nicholas, or what thing may him ayle,

¹ Gower has this proverb, *Conf. Amant.* iii. 58 :—

'An olde sawe is, who that is slyghe
 In place wher he may be nyghe,
 He maketh the ferre leef loth.'—T.

And seyde, ' I am adrad, by scynt Thomas!
 It stondeþ nat aright with Nicholas;
 God schilde that he deyde sodeinly.
 This world is now ful tykel sikerly;
 I saugh to-day a corps y-born to chirche.
 That now on Monday last I saugh him wirche.
 Go up,' quod he unto his knave, ' anoon;
 Clepe at his dore, or knocke with a stoon;
 Loke how it is, and telle me boldely.'
 This knave goth him up ful sturdily,
 And at the chambir dore whil he stood,
 He cryed and knocked as that he were wood;
 ' What how? what do ye, mayster Nicholay!
 How may ye slepen al this longe day?'
 But al for nought, he herde nat o word.
 An hole he fond right lowe upon the boord,
 Ther as the cat was wont in for to creepe,
 And at that hole he loked in ful deepe;
 And atte laste he hadde of him a sight.
 This Nicholas sat ever gapyng upright,
 As he had loked on the newe moone.
 Adoun he goth, and tolde his mayster soone,
 In what aray he sawh this ilke man.
 This carpenter to blessen¹ him bygan,
 And seyde, ' Now help us, seynte Frideswyde!²
 A man woot litel what him schal betyde.
 This man is falle with his astronomye
 In som woodnesse, or in som agonye.
 I thought ay wel how that it schulde be.
 Men schulde nought knowe of Goddes pryvyté.
 Ye, blessed be alwey a lewed man,
 That nat but oonly his bileeve can.³

¹ To cross himself.

² Sainte is the feminine form of saint. St. Frideswide was patroness of a considerable priory at Oxford, and being a Saxon is invoked with the more propriety by the carpenter.—T.

³ All that he knew in the way of learning was his creed. Learning consisted primarily in knowing Latin, and in this language even poor people were taught to repeat their *credo*, or *belief*.

So ferde another clerk with astronomye;
 He walked in the feeldes for to pry
 Upon the sterres, what ther schulde bifalle,
 Til he was in a marle pit i-falle.¹
 He saugh nat that. But yet, by seint Thomas!
 Me reweth sore for heende Nicholas;
 He schal be ratyd of his studyyng,
 If that I may, by Jhesu heven kyng!
 Gete me a staf, that I may underspore,
 Whil that thou, Robyn, hevest up the dore:
 He schal out of his studyyng, as I gesse.
 And to the chambir dore he gan him dresse.
 His knave was a strong karl for the noones,
 And by the hasp he haf it up at oones;
 And in the floor the dore fil down anoon.
 This Nicholas sat stille as eny stoon,
 And ever he gapyd up-ward to the eyr.
 This carpenter wende he were in despeir,
 And hent him by the schuldres mightily,
 And schook him harde, and cryed spitously,
 'What, Nicholas? what how, man? loke adoun;
 Awake, and thynk on Cristes passioun.
 I crowche the from elves and from wightes.'
 Therwith the night-spel² seyde he anon rightes,
 On the foure halves of the hous aboute,
 And on the threisshfold of the dore withoute.

¹ He alludes to a story told of Thales by Plato in his *Theætetus*, but our author probably read it in the *Cento Novelle Antiche*. N. 36.—T.

² These spells were probably derived from the ancient exorcisms common to the Jewish and Christian churches.—(Acts xix. 13.) When used by the vulgar they generally consisted of a string of unmeaning words of imposing sound. There is an example in *Lear*, Act iii., sc. iv.:—

'St. Withold footed thrice the wold,
 He met the night-mare and her nine-fold,
 Bid her alight and her troth plight,
 And aroint thee, witch! aroint thee!'

Tyrwhitt, for *nyghtes verray*, reads *nightes mare* (see next page). A curious 'spell' in Anglo-Saxon, resembling this, is given in RASKE'S *Grammar* and THORPE'S *Analecta*. [Dr. R. Morris (Aldine ed.) reads *Fro nightes mare verye thee with Paternoster*, i.e. 'defend thee,' which, though speculative, is the only intelligible reading that has been suggested.]

' Lord Jhesu Crist, and seynte Benedight,
 Blesse this hous from every wikkede wight,
 Fro nyghtes verray, the white Pater-noster;
 Wher wonestow now, seynte Petres soster?
 And atte laste, heende Nicholas
 Gan for to syke sore, and seyde, ' Allas!
 Schal al the world be lost eftsones now?'
 This carpenter answerde, ' What seystow?
 What? thenk on God, as we doon, men that swinke.'
 This Nicholas answerde, ' Fette me drynke;
 And after wol I speke in pryvytè
 Of certeyn thing that toucheth the and me ;
 I wol telle it non other man certayn.'
 This carpenter goth forth, and comth agayn,
 And brought of mighty ale a large quart.
 Whan ech of hem y-dronken had his part,
 This Nicholas his dore gan to schitte,
 And dede this carpenter down by him sitte,
 And seide, ' Johan, myn host ful leve and deere,
 Thou schalt upon thy trouthe swere me heere,
 That to no wight thou schalt this counsel wreye;
 For it is Cristes counsel that I seye,
 And if thou telle it man, thou art forlore ;
 For this vengauce thou schalt han therfore,
 That if thou wreye me, thou schalt be wood.'
 ' Nay, Crist forbede it for his holy blood!
 Quod tho this sely man, ' I am no labbe,
 Though I it say, I am nought leef to gabbe.
 Say what thou wolt, I schal it never telle
 To child ne wyf, by him that harwed helle!'¹

¹ It was the prevailing belief in the middle ages, founded on 1 Peter, iii. 19, iv. 6, and Coloss. ii. 15, that our Lord, when he descended into the place of departed spirits, preached the Gospel to those who before His incarnation, had served God as far as their imperfect knowledge enabled them; that he thus made them partakers of the benefits of the atonement, and rescued them from the prison in which they had been confined, called the *limbus patrum*. This was called the ' Harrowing of Hell,' of which there is a beautiful etching in Albert Dürer's *Der Kleine Passion*. ' In the year 1487,' says Warton, ' while Henry VII. kept his residence at the Castle of Winchester, on occasion of the birth of Prince

' Now, Johan,' quod Nicholas, ' I wol not lye:
 I have i-founde in myn astrologye,
 As I have loked in the moone bright,
 That now on Monday next, at quarter night,
 Schal falle a reyn, and that so wilde and wood,
 That half so gret was never Noes flood.
 This worlde,' he seyde, ' more than an hour
 Schal ben i-dreynt, so hidous is the schour:
 Thus schal mankynde drench, and leese his lyf.'
 This carpenter answered, ' Allas, my wyf!
 And shal she drenche? alas, myn Alisoun!
 For sorwe of this he fel almost adoun,
 And seyde, ' Is ther no remedy in this caas?'
 ' Why yis, for Gode,' quod heende Nicholas;
 ' If thou wolt worken aftir lore and reed;
 Thou maist nought worke after thin owen heed.
 For thus seith Salomon, that was ful trewe,
 Werke by counseil, and thou schalt nat rewe.¹
 And if thou worken wolt by good counsail,
 I undertake, withouten mast and sail,
 Yet schal I saven hir, and the, and me.
 Hastow nat herd how saved was Noe,
 Whan that our Lord had warned him biforn,
 That al the world with watir schulde be lorn?'
 ' Yis,' quod this carpenter, ' ful yore ago,'
 ' Hastow nought herd,' quod Nicholas, ' also
 The sorwe of Noe with his felaschipe,
 That he hadde or he gat his wyf² to schipe?

Arthur, on a Sunday, during the time of dinner, he was entertained with a religious drama called *Christi descensus ad inferos*, or Christ's descent into hell.' Registr. Priorat. S. Swithin. Winton. MS. He also gives, from the Harl. MSS., a poem on the same subject (since printed by Mr. Halliwell), beginning—

' Alle herkneth to me now;
 A strif wolle I tellen ou
 Of Jhesu ant of Sathan
 Tho Jhesu wes to helle y-gan.'

The first edition of the Thirty-nine Articles asserted this doctrine; but it was afterwards thought better to leave the members of the Church of England to their liberty in interpreting a text of Scripture.

¹ Prov. ix. 14.

² This is probably an allusion to a supposed dispute between Noah

Him hadde wel lever, I dar wel undertake,
 At thilke tyme, than alle his wetheres blake,
 That sche hadde had a schip herself allone.
 And therfore wostow what is best to doone?
 This axeth hast, and of an hasty thing
 Men may nought preche or make taryyng.
 Anon go gete us fast into this in
 A knedyng trowh or elles a kemelyn,
 For ech of us; but loke that they be large,
 In which that we may rowe as in a barge,
 And have therin vitaille suffisant
 But for o day; fy on the remenant;
 The water schal aslake and gon away
 Aboute prime upon the nexte day.
 But Robyn may not wite of this, thy knave,
 Ne ek thy mayde Gille I may not save;
 Aske nought why; for though thou aske me,
 I wol nat tellen Goddes pryveté.
 Sufficeth the, but if that thy witt madde,¹
 To have as gret a grace as Noe hadde.

and his wife, as represented in the religious plays or mysteries (see *ante*, p. 188, note 3), of which the following specimen is taken from Mr. Wright's edition of the *Chester Whitsun Plays*, printed for the Shakespeare Society:—

Noe. Wife, come in, why standes thou there?
 Thou art ever froward, that dare I swere.
 Come in on Godes halfe; tyme it were,
 For fear lest that we drowne.

Wife. Yea, sir, set up your saile,
 And rowe forth with evil haile,
 For withouten anie faile,
 I wil not oute of this towne;
 But I have my gossepes everich one
 One foote further I wil not gone:
 They shall not drown, by St. John,
 And I may save their life.
 They loved me full well, by Christ;
 But thou will let them into thy chist,
 Ellis rowe forth, Noe, when thou list,
 And get thee a newe wife.

At last Sem, with the assistance of his brethren, fetches her on board by force; and upon Noah's welcoming her, she gives him a box on the ear.

¹ Be mad; *madde* is here a verb.

Thy wyf schal I wel saven out of doute.
 Go now thy wey, and speed the heer aboute:
 And whan thou hast for hir, and the, and me,
 I-gotten us this knedyng tubbes thre,
 Than schalt thou hange hem in the roof ful hie,
 That no man of oure purveaunce aspye;
 And whan thou thus hast doon as I have seyde,
 And hast our vitaille faire in hem y-leyde,
 And eek an ax to smyte the corde a-two
 Whan that the water cometh, that we may goo,
 And breke an hole an hye upon the gable
 Into the gardyn-ward over the stable,
 That we may frely passen forth oure way,
 Whan that the grete schour is gon away;
 Than schaltow swymme as mery, I undertake,
 As doth the white doke aftir hir drake;
 Than wol I clepe, How Alisoun, how Jon,¹
 Beoth merye, for the flood passeth anon.
 And thou wolt seye, Heyl, maister Nicholay,
 Good morn, I see the wel, for it is day.
 And than schul we be lordes al oure lyf
 Of al the world, as Noe and his wyf.
 But of oo thing I warne the ful right,
 Be wel avysed of that ilke nyght,
 • That we ben entred into schippes boord,
 That non of us ne speke not a word,
 Ne clepe ne crye, but be in his preyere,
 For it is Goddes owne heste deere.
 Thy wyf and thou most hangen fer a-twynne,
 For that bitwixe you schal be no synne,²

¹ The familiar appellation for Johan.

² It was part of the moral theology of that age that matrimony almost necessarily involved the commission of, at least, venial sin.—See Dens' *Theology*. In the *Persones Tale* (remedium contra luxuriam) this doctrine is stated. 'The trewe effect of mariage clensith fornicacioun, and replenischith holy chirche of good lynage; for that is the ende of mariage, and it chaungeth dedly synne into venyal synne betwixe hem that ben wedded.' This almost seems a form of Manicheism, a belief that matter, and therefore the body, is essentially evil, which, while condemned in terms by the Church, yet became deeply-rooted in her

No more in lokyng than ther schal in dede.
 This ordynaunce is seyde;¹ so God me speede.
 To morwe at night, whan men ben aslepe,
 Into our knedyng tubbes wol we crepe,
 And sitte ther, abydyng Goddes grace.
 Go now thy way, I have no lenger space
 To make of this no lenger sermonyng;
 Men seyn thus, send the wyse, and sey no thing;
 Thou art so wys, it needeth nat the teche.
 Go, save oure lyf. and that I the byseche.

This seely carpenter goth forth his way,
 Ful ofte he seyde, ' Allas, and weylaway!'
 And to his wyf he told his pryveté,
 And sche was war, and knew it bet than he,
 What al this queinte caste was for to seye.
 But natheles sche ferd as sche schuld deye,
 And seyde, ' Allas! go forth thy way anon,
 Help us to skape, or we be ded echon.

I am thy verray trewe wedded wyf;
 Go, deere spouse, and help to save oure lyf.'
 Lo, which a gret thing is affeccioun!²

A man may dye for ymaginacioun,
 So deepe may impressioun be take.
 This seely carpenter bygynneth quake;
 Him thenketh verrayly that he may se
 Noes flood come walking as the see
 To drenchen Alisoun, his hony deere.
 He weepeth, wayleth, maketh sory cheere,
 He siketh, with ful many a sory swough,
 And goth, and geteth him a knedyng trough,

theology. Of this doctrine Coleridge observes, in his *Table-Talk*, ' Even the best and most enlightened men in Romanist countries attach a notion of impurity to the marriage of a clergyman [he might have carried it farther]; and can such a feeling be without its effect on wedded life in general? Impossible! and the morals of both sexes in Spain, Italy, France, &c., prove it abundantly.' The doctrine was probably founded on Matt. xix. 12, Exod. xix. 15, 1 Sam. xxi. 4, 1 Cor. vii., and forms the key to the eremitic and monastic system.

¹ An affectation of the oracular solemnity assumed by fortune-tellers.

² Fancy.

And after that a tubbe, and a kymelyn,
 And pryvely he sent hem to his in,
 And heng hem in the roof in pryveté.
 His owne hond than made laddres thre,
 To clymben by the ronges and the stalkes
 Unto the tubbes hangyng in the balkes;
 And hem vitayled, bothe trough and tubbe,
 With breed and cheese, with good ale in a jubbe.
 Suffisyng right ynough as for a day.
 But or that he had maad al this array,
 He sent his knave and eek his wenche also
 Upon his neede to Londone for to go,
 And on the Monday, whan it drew to nyght,
 He schette his dore, withouten candel light,
 And dressed al this thing as it schuld be.
 And schortly up they clumben alle thre.
 They seten stille wel a forlong way:
 'Now, *Pater noster*, clum,'¹ quod Nicholay,
 And 'clum,' quod Jon, and 'clum,' quod Alisoun.
 This carpenter seyde his devocioun,
 And stille he sitt, and byddeth² his prayere,
 Ay waytyng on the reyn, if he it heere.
 The deede sleep, for verray busynesse,
 Fil on this carpenter, right as I gesse,
 Abowten courfew³ tyme, or litel more.
 For travail of his goost he groneth sore,

¹ Tyrwhitt says this word is derived from the Saxon, *clumian*, to mutter. *Clum*, however, seems to have meant merely silence, the sense in which it appears to be used in the text.

² To *bid* is to pray, and *bead* is a prayer (German, *bitten*), hence the old expression for saying the English prayer before the sermon was, *bidding the beads*.

³ It is generally supposed that the origin of the *curfew* was an enactment of William the Conqueror; but if Peshall (*Hist. of City of Oxford*, p. 177) is to be believed, it is of much earlier date. He says, 'The custom of ringing the bell at Carfax every night at eight o'clock (called *curfew bell*, or cover-fire bell) was by order of King Alfred, the restorer of our University,' &c. There are indications in Shakespeare (*Romeo and Juliet*, iv. 4), and in the local histories, that there were *two* bells, one at eight in the evening (properly called the *curfew*), and another at dawn, to which the name was improperly applied.

And eft he routeth, for his heed myslay.
 Doun of the laddir stalketh Nicholay,
 And Alisoun ful softe adoun hir spedde.
 Withouten wordes mo they goon to bedde;
 Ther as the carpenter was wont to lye,
 Ther was the revel and the melodye.
 And thus lith Alisoun and Nicholas,
 In busynesse of myrthe and of solas,
 Till that the belles of laudes¹ gan to ryng,
 And freres in the chauncel gan to synge.

This parissch clerk, this amerous Absolon,
 That is for love so harde and woo bygon,
 Upon the Monday was at Osenay
 With company, him to desporte and play;
 And axed upon caas² a cloysterer
 Ful pryvely after the carpenter;
 And he drough him aparte out of the chirche,
 And sayde, 'Nay, I say him nat here wirche
 Syn Satirday: I trow that he be went
 For tymber, ther our abbot hath him sent.
 For he is wont for tymber for to goo,
 And dwellen at the Graunge³ a day or tuo.
 Or elles he is at his hous certayn.
 Wher that he be, I can nat sothly sayn.'

This Absolon ful joly was and light,
 And thoughte, 'Now is tyme wake al night,
 For sikerly I sawh him nought styryng
 Aboute his dore, syn day bigan to spryng.

¹ *Lauds* was a short service sung immediately after *matins*, which last, in religious houses, began (or *ought* to have begun) to be sung at midnight, and could hardly have been concluded in less than two hours: allowing, therefore, a short interval for ringing the bells, the time indicated would be between two and three o'clock.

² By chance, as it were.

³ *Grange* is a French word, meaning properly a barn, and was applied to outlying farms belonging to the abbeys. The manual labour on these farms was performed by an inferior class of monks, called *lay-brothers*, who were excused from many of the requirements of the monastic rule (see Fleury, *Eccles. Hist.*), but they were superintended by the monks themselves, who were allowed occasionally to spend some days at the Grange for this purpose.—See *Schipmanes Tale*.

So mote I thryve, I schal at cokkes crowe
 Ful pryvely go knokke at his wyndowe,
 That stant ful lowe npon his bowres wal;
 To Alisoun than wol I tellen al
 My love-longyng; for yet I schal not mysse
 That atte leste wey I schal hir kisse.
 Som maner comfort schal I have, parfay!
 My mouth hath icched al this longe day;
 That is a signe of kysyng atte leste.
 Al nyght I mette eek I was at a feste.
 Therefore I wol go slepe an hour or tweye,
 And al the night than wol I wake and pleye.
 Whan that the firste cok hath crowe, anon
 Up ryst this jolyf lover Absolon,
 And him arrayeth gay, at poynt devys.
 But first he cheweth greyn and lycoris,
 To smellen swete, or he hadde kempt his heere.
 Under his tunge a trewe love he beere,
 For therby wende he to be gracious.
 He rometh to the carpenteres hous,
 And stille he stant under the schot wyndowe;
 Unto his brest it raught, it was so lowe;
 And softe he cowhith with a semysoun:
 'What do ye, honycomb, swete Alisoun?
 My fayre bryd, my swete cynamome,
 Awake, lemman myn, and speketh to me.
 Ful litel thynke ye upon my wo,
 That for youre love I swelte ther I go.
 No wonder is if that I swelte and swete,
 I morne as doth a lamb after the tete.
 I-wis, lemman, I have such love-longyng,
 That like a turtill trewe is my moornyng.
 I may not ete more than a mayde.'
 'Go fro the wyndow, jakke fool,' sche sayde;
 'As help me God, it wol not be, compame.¹
 I love another, and elles were I to blame,

¹ *Compame* is used by poetic licence for *compaine*, companion, with the force of *friend*, or *neighbour*.

Wel bet than the, by Jhesu, Absolon.
 Go forth thy wey, or I wol cast a stoon ;
 And let me slepe, a twenty devel way !
 ' Allas ! ' quod Absolon, ' and weylaway !
 That trewe love was ever so ylle byset ;
 Thanne kisseth me, syn it may be no bett,
 For Jesus love, and for the love of me.'
 ' Wilt thou than go thy wey therwith ? ' quod sche.
 ' Ye, certes, lemman, ' quod this Absolon.
 ' Than mak the redy, ' quod sche, ' I come anon.'
 This Absolon doun sette him on his knees,
 And seide, ' I am a lord at alle degrees ;
 For after this I hope ther cometh more ;
 Lemman, thy grace, and, swete bryd, thyn ore.'¹
 The wyndow sche undyd, and that in hast ;
 ' Have doon, ' quod sche, ' com of, and speed the fast,
 Lest that our neygheboures the aspye.'
 This Absolon gan wipe his mouth ful drye.
 Derk was the night as picche or as a cole,
 Out atte wyndow putte sche hir hole :
 And Absolon him fel no bet ne wers,
 But with his mouth he kist hir naked ers
 Ful savorly. Whan he was war of this,
 Abak he sterte, and thought it was amys,
 For wel he wist a womman hath no berd.
 He felt a thing al rough and long i-herd,
 And seyde, ' Fy, allas ! what have I do ?
 ' Te-hee ! ' quod sche, and clapt the wyndow to ;
 And Absolon goth forth a sory paas.
 ' A berd, a berd ! ' quod heende Nicholas ;
 ' By Goddes corps, this game goth fair and wel.'
 This seely Absolon herd every del,

¹ *Ore* is 'favour.' Thus, in a love song of the reign of Edward I., printed by Mr. Wright in his volume of *Lyric Poetry*, published by the Percy Society :—

' Ich haue loued al this yer that y may loue na more
 Ich haue siked moni syk, *lemmon*, for *thin ore*.'

And on his lippe he gan for angir byte;
 And to himself he seyde, 'I schal the quyte.'

Who rubbith now, who froteth now his lippes
 With dust, with sand, with straw, with cloth, with
 chippes,

But Absolon? that seith ful ofte, 'Allas,
 My soule bytake I unto Sathanas!
 But me were lever than alle this toun,' quod he,
 'Of this dispit awroken for to be.

Allas!' quod he, 'allas! I nadde bleynt!
 His hote love was cold, and al i-queint.
 For fro that tyme that he had kist her ers,
 Of paramours ne sette he nat a kers,
 For he was helyd of his maledye;
 Ful ofte paramours he gan deffye,
 And wept as doth a child that is i-bete.

A soft paas went he over the strete
 Unto a smyth, men clepith daun Gerveys,
 That in his forge smythed plowh-harneys;
 He scharpeth schar and cultre bysily.

This Absolon knokketh al esily,
 And seyde, 'Undo, Gerveys, and that anoon.'
 'What, who art thou?' 'It am I Absolon.'
 'What? Absolon, what? Cristes swete tree!

Why ryse ye so rathe? *benedicite*,
 What eyleth you? some gay gurl, God it woot,
 Hath brought you thus upon the verytrot;
 By seinte Noet!¹ ye wot wel what I mene.'

This Absolon ne roughete nat a bene
 Of al his pleye, no word agayn he gaf;
 For he hadde more tow on his distaf²
 Than Gerveys knew, and seyde, 'Freend so deere,
 That hote cultre in the chymney heere

¹ St. Neot was a Saxon saint, and therefore appropriately invoked by the blacksmith.

² He had other business to think of. The same expression is used by Froissart, as quoted by Tyrwhitt—'*Il aura en bref temps autres estoupes en sa quenaille.*'

As lene it me, I have therwith to doone ;
 I wol it bring agayn to the ful soone.
 Gerveys answerde, ' Certes, were it gold,
 Or in a poke nobles al untold,
 Ye schul him have, as I am trewe smyth.
 Ey, Cristes fote !¹ what wil ye do therwith !'
 ' Therof,' quod Absolon, ' be as be may ;
 I schal wel telle it the to morwe day ;'
 And caughte the cultre by the colde stele.
 Ful soft out at the dore he gan it stole,
 And wente unto the carpenteres wal.
 He cowheth first, and knokketh therwithal
 Upon the wyndow, right as he dede er.
 This Alisoun answerde, ' Who is ther
 That knokketh so ? I warant it a theef.'
 ' Why nay,' quod he, ' God woot, my sweete leef,
 I am thyn Absolon, o my derlyng.
 Of gold,' quod he, ' I have the brought a ryng ;
 My mooder gaf it me, so God me save !
 Ful fyn it is, and therto wel i-grave ;
 This wol I give the, if thou me kisse.'
 This Nicholas was rise for to pysse,
 And thought he wold amenden al the jape,
 He schulde kisse his ers or that he skape.
 And up the wyndow dyde he hastily,
 And out his ers putteth he pryvely
 Over the buttok, to the haunche bon.
 And therwith spak this clerk, this Absolon,
 ' Spek, sweete bryd, I wot nat wher thou art.'
 This Nicholas anon let flee a fart,
 As gret as it had ben a thundir dent,
 And with that strook he was almost i-blent ;
 And he was redy with his yren hoot,
 And Nicholas amid the ers he smoot.

¹ This strange profanity of swearing by different parts of the Redeemer's body has a counterpart in the devotions addressed to them. This particular oath may be considered appropriate to the blacksmith, part of whose business consisted in *shoeing* horses.

Ot goth the skyn an hande-brede aboute,
 The hoothe cultre brente so his toute ;
 And for the smert he wende for to dye ;
 As he were wood, anon he gan to crye,
 ‘ Help, watir, watir, help, for Goddes herte !’
 This carpenter out of his slumber sterte,
 And herd on crye watir, as he wer wood,
 And thought, ‘ Allas, now cometh Noes flood !’
 He sit him up withoute wordes mo,
 And with his ax he smot the corde a-two ;
 And doun he goth ; he fond nowthir to selle¹
 No breed ne ale, til he com to the selle
 Upon the floor, and ther aswoun he lay.
 Up styrt hir Alisoun, and Nicholay,
 And cryden, ‘ out and harrow !’ in the strete.
 The neyghebours bothe smal and grete,
 In ronnen, for to gauren on this man,
 That yet aswowne lay, bothe pale and wan ;
 For with the fal he brosten had his arm.
 But stond he muste to his owne harm,
 For whan he spak, he was anon born doun
 With heende Nicholas and Alisoun.
 They tolden every man that he was wood ;
 He was agast and feerd of Noes flood
 Thurgh fantasie, that of his vanité
 He hadde i-bought him knedyng tubbes thre,
 And hadde hem hanged in the roof above ;
 And that he preyed hem for Goddes love
 To sitten in the roof *par compaignye*.
 The folk gan lawhen at his fantasye ;
 Into the roof they kyken, and they gape,
 And torne al his harm into a jape.
 For whatsoever the carpenter answerde,
 It was for nought, no man his resoun herde,

¹ He found no business or advantage to stop him, till, &c. Tyrwhitt quotes a similar phrase from the *Fabliaux*, tom. ii., p. 282 :—

‘ Ainc tant come il mist à descendre,
 Ne trouva point de pain à vendre.’

With othis greet he was so sworn adoun,
 That he was holden wood in al the toun.
 For every clerk anon right heeld with othir;
 They seyde, 'The man was wood, my leeve brother';
 And every man gan lawhen at his stryf.

Thus swyved was the carpenteres wyf
 For al his kepyng and his gelousye;
 And Absolon hath kist hir nethir ye;
 And Nicholas is skaldid in his towte.
 This tale is doon, and God save al the route.

THE PROLOGE OF THE REEVE.

WHAN folk hadde lawhen of this nyce caas
 Of Absolon and heende Nicholas,
 Dyverse folk dyversely they seyde,
 But for the moste part they lowh and pleyde;
 Ne at this tale I sawh no man him greve.
 But it were oonly Osewald the Reeve.
 Bycause he was of carpentrye craft,¹
 A litel ire in his herte is laft;
 He gan to grucche and blamed it a lite.
 'So theek,'² quod he, 'ful wel coude I the quyte
 With bleryng of a prowde mylleres ye,³
 If that me luste speke of ribaudye.
 But yk am old; me list not pley for age;
 Gras tyme is doon, my foddur is now forage.'⁴

¹ There appears to have been a strong *esprit de corps* among fellow-craftsmen in the middle ages, arising from the necessity of combination for mutual protection at a time when the laws were weak. Hence the *guilds* and confraternities then so prevalent.

² Put for *so thee ich*, so may I thrive. *Ich*, which is also the German for I, is often used in Chaucer by the lower orders, who may be supposed to have retained most of the Saxon forms. It occurs again in other places. [See note on p. 70.—W. W. S.]

³ With a trick put upon a proud miller. To blear the eye is, literally, to make the sight dim; metaphorically, to cheat.

⁴ My grass has become hay, a metaphor common in Scripture, as in Isaiah xl. 6.

My whyte top writeth myn olde yeeres ;
 Myn hert is al so moulyd as myn heeres ;
 But yit I fare as doth an open-ers ;
 That ilke fruyt is ever lenger the wers,
 Til it be rote in mullok or in stree.
 We olde men, I drede, so fare we,
 Til we be roten, can we nat be rype ;
 We hoppen alway, whil the world wol pype ;
 For in oure wil ther stiketh ever a nayl,
 To have an hoor heed and a greene tayl,¹
 As hath a leek ; for though oure might be doon,
 Oure wil desireth folye ever in oon ;
 For whan we may nat do, than wol we speke,
 Yet in oure aisschen old is fyr i-reke.²
 Foure gledys have we, which I schal devyse,
 Avanting, lyyng, angur, coveytise.
 This foure sparkys longen unto eelde.
 Oure olde lymes mowen be unweelde,
 But wil ne schal nat fayle us, that is soth.
 And yet I have alwey a coltes toth,
 As many a yeer as it is passed henne,
 Syn that my tappe of lyf bygan to renne.
 For sikirlik, whan I was born, anon
 Deth drough the tappe of lyf,³ and leet it goon ;
 And now so longe hath the tappe i-ronne,
 Til that almost al empty is the tonne.
 The stream of lyf now droppeth on the chymbe.⁴
 The sely tonge may wel rynge and chimbe
 Of wrecchednes, that passed is ful yooore :
 With olde folk, sauf dotage, is no more.'

¹ Boccaccio has the same allusion. *Dec. Introd.* to D. 4, 'Che il porro habbi il capo bianchi, che la coda sia verde.'

² Tyrwhitt remarks that this beautiful metaphor has been used in his *Elegy* by Gray, who, however, refers to the 169th Sonnet of Petrarch as his original.

³ Another and more refined form of the thought occurs in the *Knights Tale*:—

'That schapen was my deth erst than my scherte.'

⁴ *Kime*, Teut., means the prominence of the staves beyond the head

Whan that oure Host had herd this sermonyng,
 He gan to speke as lordly as a kyng,
 And seyde, 'What amounteth al this wit?
 What? schul we speke al day of holy wryt?
 The devyl made a reve for to preche,
 Or of a sowter a schipman or a leche.¹
 Sey forth thi tale, and tarye nat the tyme;
 Lo heer is Depford, and it is passed prime;²
 Lo Grenewich, ther many a schrewe is inne;³
 It were al tyme thi tale to bygynne.'

'Now, sires,' quod this Osewold the Reeve,
 'I pray yow alle, that noon of you him greeve,
 Though I answeere, and somewhat sette his howve,⁴
 For leeful is with force force to showve.
 This dronken Myllere hath i-tolde us heer,
 How that bygiled was a carpenter,

of the barrel. The imagery is very exact and beautiful.—T. This word is still used in Norfolk and Suffolk.

¹ Probably an allusion to *Phædrus*, lib. i. fab. 14. Whence the proverb, *ex sutore medicus*. *Ex sutore nauclerus* is alluded to by Pynson, the printer, at the end of his edition of LITTLETON's *Tenures*, 1525.

² The ecclesiastical day, which was also the civil in those ages when the Church was the fountain of knowledge and authority, was divided into portions, for each of which an office, consisting of psalms, metrical hymns, and prayers, was appointed to be said or sung. The first was *matins*, beginning at midnight; the next *prime*, at six in the morning; the next *tierce*, at nine; the next *sext*, at twelve; and the next *none*, at three; the next was vespers, or evensong, at six; and the last, before retiring to rest, was *compline*, or *completorium*. It would appear, however, from the fact that *noon* means twelve o'clock and not three, that time was usually counted by reckoning so much *before* each of these hours; as in the Roman Calendar, the days of the month are counted before the calends, ides, and nones, and are called *pridie calendas*, *secunda calendas*, meaning *ante calendas*. Thus, as soon as six o'clock, *prime*, was past, the time would be counted as so much before *tierce*; as soon as mid-day was past, it would be called *none* or noon. This is confirmed by the fact that in the *Shepherd's Almanac* *noon* is mid-day, *high noon*, three o'clock. For passed prime Tyrwhitt reads *half-way prime*, which is probably right; but he supposes it to mean half-way between prime and tierce, *scil.*, half-past seven, whereas it means that the middle of the period between matins and prime had arrived; for, the squyer, long afterwards, says:—'I wol not tarien you, for it is prime.' [This, however, probably applies to another day. See Scheme, vol. ii. pp. 351-354.]

³ Greenwich was apparently the Billingsgate of that time.

⁴ *Set his hood*, meaning the same as set his cap. See *ante*, p. 101.

Peraventure in scorn, for I am oon;
 And by your leve, I schal him quyte anoon.
 Right in his cherles termes wol I speke;
 I pray to God his nekke mot to-breke!
 He can wel in myn eye see a stalke,
 But in his owne he can nought seen a balke.’¹

THE REEVES TALE.

[FOR the subject of this tale Tyrwhitt supposes that Chaucer was indebted to a *fabliau* printed in Barbazan under the title of *De Gombert et des Deux Clercs*; but Mr. Wright has since discovered and pointed out to notice in his *Anecdota Literaria* another *fabliau* on the same subject, which is more likely to have been the original. The fable was a favourite in the middle ages, and forms the basis of the sixth novel of the ninth day in Boccaccio’s *Decameron*; but Chaucer’s version is much superior to Boccaccio’s, which is more licentious, and at the same time so bald, as to appear like the mere argument or heading of a chapter. The Reeve, who is represented as a ‘choleric man,’ certainly takes ample vengeance for the Miller’s reflections on his trade. The poetical justice of the catastrophe is well preserved; Deynous Symekyn is punished in every particular in which he exhibited an overweening pride. He was a bully, and he is well beaten. He boasted of stealing the corn belonging to the college, and even the toll to which he is entitled is taken from him. He was elated by the high extraction of his wife and daughter, and in both points he is humbled; while his cunning expedient to overreach the two clerks, upon which he dwells with so much complacency, is the proximate cause of all his misfortunes. The sharpness of the clerks is characteristic of their country, the West Riding of ‘canny Yorkshire.’ It might at first be supposed that the fact of the miller’s wife’s being repre-

¹ An allusion to Matt. vii. 3.

sented as the daughter of a priest is an example, among many, of the hostility with which Chaucer regarded the clergy; but it seems more reasonable to suppose that he intended it to be understood that the priest was a widower, and that Simkin's wife was the issue of a marriage contracted before he took orders; otherwise the circumstances of her birth could hardly have been a subject of pride to her husband.]

AT Trompyngtoun, nat fer fro Cantebrigge,
 Ther goth a brook, and over that a brigge,
 Upon the whiche brook ther stant a melle:
 And this is verray sothe that I you telle.
 A meller was ther dwellyng many a day,
 As eny pecok he was prowde and gay;
 Piben he coude, and fische, and nettys beete,
 And turne cuppes, wrastle wel, and scheete.¹
 Ay by his belt he bar a long panade,
 And of a swerd ful trenchaunt was the blade.
 A joly popper bar he in his pouche;
 Ther was no man for perel durst him touche.
 A Scheffeld thwitel bar he in his hose.
 Round was his face, and camois was his nose.
 As pyled as an ape was his skulle.
 He was a market-beter at the fulle.
 Ther durste no wight hand upon him legge,
 That he ne swor anon he schuld abegge.
 A theef he was for soth of corn and mele,
 And that a sleigh, and usyng for to stele.
 His name was hoote deynous Symekyn.²
 A wyf he hadde, come of noble kyn;

¹ The Miller's skill in fishing and mending nets is characteristic both of his trade and place of residence. *Bete* is still used in East Anglia for *repair*. 'Cups' were of course made of wood with a lathe. To *scheete* (German, *schieszen*) means, of course, to shoot with the long-bow, the redoubted weapon of the English yeoman.

² Disdainful Simon, of which *Simkin* is the diminutive. Tyrwhitt observes, that in the middle ages, and even to a comparatively late period, the lower orders had no surnames, the want of which was supplied by a name derived from some personal peculiarity. Hence the expression *nullius filius*, a man with no patronymic. The operatives

The persoun¹ of the toun hir fader was.
 With hire he gaf ful many a panne of bras,
 For that Symkyn schuld in his blood allye.
 Sche was i-fostryd in a nonnerye;
 For Symkyn wolde no wyf, as he sayde
 But sche were wel i-norissched and a mayde,
 To saven his estaat and yomanrye.²
 And sche was proud and pert as is a pye.
 A ful fair sighte was ther on hem two;
 On haly dayes bifore hir wold he go
 With his typet y-bounde about his heed;
 And sche cam aftir in a gyte of reed,
 And Symkyn hadde hosen of the same.
 Ther durst no wight clepe hir but *madame*;³
 Was noon so hardy walkyng by the weye,
 That with hir dorste rage or elles pleye,
 But if he wold be slayn of Symekyn
 With panade, or with knyf, or boydekyn;
 For gelous folk ben perilous evermo,
 Algate they wolde here wyves wende so.
 And eek for sche was somdel smoterlich,
 Sche was as deyne as water in a dich,⁴

and agricultural labourers in France are to this day known only by their baptismal names. When, after the late Revolution, the people elected one of their own number to sit in the National Assembly, having no surname, he was called simply *Albert Ouvrier*. It was usual to distinguish persons who had risen from a low origin, and consequently had no patronymic, by the place of their birth, as Matthew Paris, Thomas Aquinas, Thomas à Kempis. So, in the *Monkes Prologue*, the 'Host' had no idea of asking the Monk his surname:—

'Whether shall I calle you my lord dan Johan,
 Or daun Thomas, or elles dan Albon.'

¹ It might at first be thought that this was a little bit of scandal about the clergy, but see introduction to this tale.

² To secure his standing in society as a yeoman.

³ In the opening *Prologue*, the wives of the haberdasher and the other citizens are described as being proud of this title. It is still applied by the common people in Norfolk to untitled ladies.

⁴ Tyrwhitt says the whole passage is obscure. 'As deyne as water in a dich,' seems to allude to some fable in which ditchwater showed unwarrantable pride, perhaps like the common one of the *Pot and the Kettle*. [The phrase 'deyne as dich-water' simply means disdainful (and

As ful of hokir, and of bissemare.
 Hir thoughte ladyes oughten hir to spare,¹
 What for hir kynreed and hir nortelrye,
 That sche had lerned in the nonnerye.
 O doughter hadden they betwix hem two,
 Of twenti ycer, withouten eny mo,
 Savyng a child that was of half yer age,
 In cradil lay, and was a proper page.
 This wenche thikke and wel i-growen was,
 With camoys nose, and eyghen gray as glas;
 And buttokkes brode, and brestes round and hye,
 But right fair was hir heer, I wol nat lyc.
 The persoun of the toun, for sche was feir,
 In purpos was to maken hir his heir,
 Bothe of his catel and his mesuage,
 And straunge made it of hir mariage.²
 His purpos was to bystow hir hye
 Into som worthy blood of ancetrye;
 For holy chirche good moot be despendid
 On holy chirche blood that is descendid.
 Therfore he wolde his joly blood honoure,
 Though that he schulde holy chirche devoure.³
 Gret soken hath this meller, oute of doute,
 With whete and malt, of al the londe aboute;
 And namely ther was a gret collegge,
 Men clepe it the Soler-halle⁴ of Cantebregge,

hence repellent) as ditch-water. It is a sort of joke; such water keeps folks at a distance, if very evil-smelling. See *Pierce the Ploughman's Crede*, ed. Skeat, l. 375.—W. W. S.]

¹ Ladies ought to treat her with consideration.

² Made it a matter of difficulty to obtain her in marriage.

³ A satire on the clergy for enriching their families out of the ecclesiastical revenues.

⁴ The hall with the soler. Before the students in the Universities were incorporated, they lived in lodging-houses, called inns, halls, and hostels, which were often distinguished by names taken from some peculiarity in their construction. One at Cambridge was called *Tylde Ostle*. And, at Oxford, Oriel College probably derives its name from a large messuage, vulgarly known by the name of *Le Oricle*, upon the site of which it stands. An *oriel* or *oriol* was a porch, as a *soler* seems originally to have signified an open gallery at the top of the house, though latterly it has been used for any upper room. FROISSART, vol. i,

Ther was here whete and eek here malt i-grounde.
 And on a day it happed in a stounde,
 Syk lay the maunceyple on a maledye,
 Men wenden wisly that he schulde dye;
 For which this meller stal both mele and corn
 A thousand part more than byforn.
 For ther biforn he stal but curteysly; .
 But now he is a thief outrageously.
 For which the wardeyn chidde and made fare,
 But therof sette the meller not a tare;
 He crakked boost, and swor it was nat so.
 Thanne weren there poore scoleres tuo,
 That dwelten in the halle of which I seye;
 Testyf they were, and lusty for to pleye;
 And, oonly for here mirthe and revelrye,
 Uppon the wardeyn bysily they crye,
 To geve hem leve but a litel stound
 To go to melle and see here corn i-grounde;
 And hardily they dursten ley here nekke,
 The meller schuld nat stel hem half a pekke
 Of corn by sleighte, ne by force hem reve.
 And atte last the wardeyn gaf hem leve.
 Johan hight that oon, and Alayn hight that other;
 Of o toun were they born that highte Strothir,¹
 Fer in the North, I can nat telle where.
 This Aleyn maketh redy al his gere,
 And on an hors the sak he cast anoon:
 Forth goth Aleyn the clerk, and also Jon,
 With good swerd and with bocler by her side.
 Johan knew the way, that hem needith no gyde;
 And at the mylle the sak adoun he layth.
 Alayn spak first: 'Al heil! Symond, in faith

c. 234, 'Les femmes de la ville monterent en leurs logis et en *solliers*.'—T. In Norfolk and Suffolk the loft in the church tower on which the ringers stand is called the *bell-soler*. — FORBY'S *Vocabulary of East Anglia*.

¹ This was the valley of Langstroth, or Langstrothdale, in the West Riding of Yorkshire, as pointed out by Dr. Whitaker, *Hist. of Craven*, p. 493.—W. Any one who has lived in the West Riding will recognize the phraseology of the clerks as still used in that county.

How fares thy faire doughter and thy wyf?
 'Alayn, welcome,' quod Symond, 'by my lyf!
 And Johan also; how now! what do ye here?'
 'By God!' quod Johan, 'Symond, need has na peere.
 Him falles¹ serve himself that has na swayn,
 Or elles he is a fon, as clerkes sayn.
 Our mancyple, as I hope,² wil be deed,
 Swa werkes ay the wanges in his heed:
 And therfore I is come, and eek Alayn,
 To grynde oure corn, and carie it ham ageyn.
 I prey you speed us in al that ye may.'
 'It schal be doon,' quod Symkyn, 'by my fay!
 What wol ye do whil that it is in hande?'
 'By God! right by the hoper wol I stande,'
 Quod Johan, 'and se how that the corn gas inne.
 Yet sawh I never, by my fader kynne!
 How that the hoper waggis to and fra.'
 Aleyn answerde, 'Johan, and wiltow swa?
 Than wol I be bynethe, by my croun!
 And se how that the mele fallys down
 Into the trough, that schal be my desport;
 For, Jon, in faith, I may be of your sort,
 I is as ille a meller as ere ye.'
 This mellere smyleth for here nyceté,

¹ It falls to his lot. Tyrwhitt and Speght read *behoves*.

² This is the vicious mode of speech called by the Greeks ακυρον
 'Such manner of uncouth speech did the Tanner of Tamworth use to
 King Edward IV.; which tanner having a great while mistaken him,
 and used very broad talk with him, at length, perceiving by his trainee
 that it was the king, was afraid he should be punished for it, and said
 thus, with a certain rude repentance:—

'I hope I shall be hanged to-morrow,'

'for I fear me I shall be hanged; whereat the king laughed a good,' &c.
 —*Arte of English Poetry*. Tyrwhitt enumerates some of the peculiarities
 of these Yorkshiremen's phraseology:—1. They terminate the third
 person singular and the whole plural number in *es*, instead of *eth*, or
en. 2. They use *a* in a great many words where Chaucer generally uses
o, as *sua* for *so*, *hame* for *home*, *fra* for *from*, *banes* for *bones*, *anes* for *ones*,
ra for *roe*. 3. Many of their words are in the obsolete Saxon form,
 as *henen* for *hens*, *whilke* (German, *welcher*) for *which*, *alsua* for *also*, and
gar for *let* or *make*. And, finally, he makes them speak ungrammatically,
 as, 'I is as ille a meller as ere ye.'

And thought, 'Al this is doon but for a wyle;
 They wenen that no man may hem bigile.
 But, by my thrift, yet schal I blere here ye,¹
 For al here sleight and al here philosophie;
 The more queynte knakkes that they make,
 The more wol I stele whan I take.
 In stede of mele, yet wol I give hem bren.
 The grettest clerks beth not the wisest men,
 As whilom to the wolf thus spak the mare;²
 Of al her art ne counte I nat a tare.'
 Out at the dore he goth ful pryvly,
 Whan that he saugh his tyme sotlyly;
 He loketh up and doun, til he hath founde
 The clerkes hors, ther as it stood i-bounde
 Behynde the mylle, under a levesel;
 And to the hors he goth him faire and wel.
 He strepeth of the bridel right anoon.
 And whan the hors was loos, he gan to goon
 Toward the fen there wilde mares renne, [thenne.
 Forth with 'wi-he!'³ thurgh thikke and eek thurgh
 This meller goth agayn, and no word seyde,
 But doth his note, and with the clerkes pleyde,
 Til that her corn was fair and wel i-grounde.
 And whan the mele was sakked and i-bounde,
 This Johan goth out, and fynt his hors away,
 And gan to crye, 'Harrow and weylaway!
 Oure hors is lost! Aleyn, for Goddes banes,
 Step on thy feet, cum on, man, al at anes.
 Allas! our wardeyn hath his palfray lorn!
 This Aleyn al forgeteth mele and corn,

¹ See *ante*, p. 216, note 3.

² Mr. Wright says that the fable of the *Wolf and the Mare* is found in the early French of *Renard le Contrefait*, from whence it appears to have been taken into the English *Reynard the Fox*. Tyrwhitt says that the story alluded to is told of a mule, in the *Cento Nov. Antiche*, No. 91. The mule pretends that his name is written on the bottom of his hind-foot. The wolf attempting to read it, the mule gives him a kick on the forehead and kills him; upon which the fox observes, 'Ogni huomo che sa lettere non è savio.'

³ Imitation of the sound of neighing.

Al was out of his mynd his housbondrye;
 'What wikked way is he gan?' gan he crye.
 The wyf cam lepyng in-ward with a ren,
 Sche seyde, 'Allas! your hors goth to the fen
 With wylde mares, as fast as he may go;
 Unthank come on his heed that band him so,
 And he that bettir schuld han knyht the reyne!
 'Allas!' quod Johan, 'Aleyn, for Cristes peyne!
 Leg¹ down thi swerd, and I sal myn alswa;
 I is ful wight, God wat, as is a ra;
 By Goddes hart! he sal nat scape us bathe.
 Why nad thou put the capil in the lathe?
 Il hail, Aleyn, by God! thou is a fon!
 This sely clerkes speeden hem anoon
 Toward the fen, bothe Aleyn and eek Jon.
 And when the myller sawh that they were gon,
 He half a busschel of the flour hath take,
 And bad his wyf go knede it in a cake.
 He seyde, 'I trowe the clerkes ben aferd!
 Yet can a miller make a clerkes berd;²
 For al his art; ye, lat hem go here way!
 Lo wher they goon! ye, lat the children play;
 They get hym nat so lightly, by my croun!
 This seely clerkes ronnen up and down, [derere!
 With 'Keep! keep! stand! stand! jossa,³ ware
 Ga wightly thou, and I sal keep him heere.'
 But schortly, til that it was verray night,
 They cowde nat, though they did al here might,
 Here capil cacche, it ran away so fast,
 Til in a diche they caught him atte last.

¹ The obsolete Saxon form of *lay* (German, *legen*), as *lig* is of *lie*.

² Cheat him. *Faire la barbe* is the French for *to shave*, as *faire les ongles* is for *to cut the nails*; But Chaucer, when he uses the expression metaphorically, translates it literally.

³ A word used to horses, meaning, apparently, 'stand still to be mounted;' for in East Anglia, the block of wood up to which the market horse used to be brought for the farmer's wife to mount her pillion from is called *the jostling* (meaning the mounting) *block*.

Wery and wete as bestys in the reyn,
 Comth sely Johan, and with him comth Aleyn.
 'Allas!' quod Johan, that day that I was born!
 Now are we dryve til hethyng and to scorn.
 Oure corn is stole, men woln us foles calle,
 Bathe the wardeyn and eek our felaws alle,
 And namely the myller, weyloway!
 Thus pleyneth Johan, as he goth by the way
 Toward the mylle, and Bayard¹ in his hand.
 The myller sittyng by the fyr he fand,
 For it was night, and forther might they nought,
 But for the love of God they him bisought
 Of herberwh and of ese, as for her peny.²
 The myller sayd agayn, 'If ther be eny,
 Swich as it is, yit schul ye have your part.
 Myn hous is streyt, but ye han lerned art;
 Ye conne by argumentes make a place
 A myl brood of twenty foote of space.
 Let se now if this place may suffice,
 Or make it rom³ with speche, as is your gyse.'
 'Now, Symond,' seyde this Johan, 'by seynt Cuth-
 Ay is thou mery, and that is fair answerd. [berd?⁴
 I have herd sey, men suld take of twa thinges,
 Slik as he fynt, or tak slik as he bringes.
 But specially I pray the, host ful deere,
 Get us som mete and drynk, and mak us cheere,

¹ A common name for a bay horse, as *lyart* is for a grey.

² Besought him to give them lodging and entertainment, as they would pay for it.

³ Make it *roomier*, more spacious. Speght reads *romer*, but this spoils the metre.

⁴ Johan appropriately swears by St. Cuthbert, a saint held in great reverence in the North of England. He retired to the 'semi-island' of Lindisfarne, as Bede calls it, where the remains of a monastery of great antiquity still exist; and his body after his death, in the year 686, was interred finally somewhere near Durham, after it had been removed to various places, on account of the incursions of the Danes; but the actual place of his sepulture is said to be kept secret by the Roman Catholics.—See notes to *Marmion*.

And we wol paye trewely at the fulle ;
 With empty hand men may na hawkes tulle.¹
 Lo heer our silver redy for to spende.¹
 This meller into toun his doughter sende
 For ale and breed, and rosted hem a goos,
 And band her hors, he schold no more go loos ,
 And in his owne chambir hem made a bed,
 With schetys and with chalouns fair i-sprede,
 Nat from his owen bed ten foot or twelve.
 His doughter had a bed al by herselfe,
 Right in the same chambre by and by ;
 It mighte be no bet, and cause why
 Ther was no rommer herberw in the place.
 They sowpen, and they speken of solace,
 And dronken ever strong ale atte beste.
 Aboute mydnyght wente they to reste.
 Wel hath the myller vernysshed his heed,
 Ful pale he was for dronken,² and nat reed ;
 He yoxeth, and he speketh thurgh the nose,
 As he were on the quakke or on the pose.
 To bed he goth, and with him goth his wyf,
 As eny jay sche light was and jolyf,
 So was hir joly whistel wel y-wet,³
 The cradil at hire beddes feet is set,

¹ To lure, a term of falconry. As few people now-a-days have an opportunity of witnessing this sport, it may be mentioned, that, when the falcon is thrown off, she flies round the falconer in circles, which she continually enlarges till she is out of sight. This is called 'waiting on.' When she has got sufficiently distant, the game is flushed, and she immediately darts at it. To recal her when the circles become too wide, he throws up a piece of wood, with the wings of a bird fixed on it, and attached to a string ; this piece of wood is called the *lure* or *tulle*. Without this lure, says Johan, a falconer cannot recal his falcon. *Tulle* appears to be the northern word for *lure*, for the *Wyf of Bath* says :—

' With empty hand man may noon hawkes *lure*.'

It occurs in the ballad of *Kynge Estmere* :—

' For an thou playest as thou beginnest,
 Thou'lt *till* my bride awaye.'

² He was all pale for drunkenness. See *ante*, p. 188, note 2.

³ To wet the whistle is still a vulgar expression for *to drink*.

To rokken, and to give the child to souke.
 And whan that dronken was al in the crouke,
 To bedde went the doughter right anon ;
 To bedde goth Aleyn, and also Jon,
 Ther nas no more, him needeth no dwale.
 This meller hath so wysly bibbed ale,
 That as an hors he snortith in his sleep,
 Ne of his tayl bihynd took he no keep.
 His wyf bar him a burdoun, a ful strong,
 Men might her rowtyng heeren a forlong.
 The wenche routeth eek *par companye*.
 Aleyn the clerk, that herd this melodye,
 He pokyd Johan, and seyde, 'Slepistow?
 Herdistow ever slik a sang er now?
 Lo, slik a conplyng is betwix hem alle,
 A wilde fyr upon thair bodyes falle!
 Wha herkned ever swilk a ferly¹ thing?
 Ye, thei sul have the flour of ille endyng!
 This lange night ther tydes me na rest.
 But yet na fors, al sal be for the best.
 For, Johan,' sayd he, 'as ever mot I thryve,
 If that I may, yone wenche sal I swyve.
 Som esement hath lawe schapen us ;
 For Johan, ther is a lawe that says thus,
 That if a man in a point be agreved,
 That in another he sal be releved.²
 Oure corn is stoln, sothly, it is na nay,
 And we have had an ylle fitt to day ;
 And syn I sal have nan amendement
 Agayn my los, I wol have esement.
 By Goddes sale! it sal nan other be.'

¹ A northern word, meaning *marvellous*, and sometimes applied to a fairy, as a marvel, or marvellous object. Thus, in *Thomas the Rhymer* :—

'True Thomas lay on Huntlie bank,
 A *ferlie* he spied wi' his ee.'

² A marginal note in the MS. says, 'Qui in uno gravatur, in alio debet relevari.'—W. Whence this maxim of law is taken does not appear.

This Johan answerd, ' Aleyn, avyse the;
 The miller is a perlous man,' he sayde,
 ' And if that he out of his sleep abrayde,
 He mighte do us bothe a vilonye.'
 Aleyn answerd, ' I count it nat a flye!
 And up he roos, and by the wenche he crepte.
 This wenche lay upright and faste slepte,
 Til he so neih was or sche might aspye
 That it had ben to late for to crye.
 And schortly for to seye, they weren at oon.
 Now pley, Alein, for I wol speke of Jon.

This Johan lith stille a forlong whyle or two,
 And to himself compleyned of his woo.
 ' Allas!' quod he, ' this is a wikked jape;
 Now may I say that I am but an ape.
 Yet hath my felaw somewhat for his harm;
 He hath the myllers doughter in his arm;
 He auntred him, and has his needes sped,
 And I lye as a draf-sak in my bed;
 And when this jape is tald another day,
 I sal be held a daf, a cokenay.¹

¹ That this is a term of contempt, borrowed originally from the kitchen, is very probable.—T. He shows from several passages in old authors that it sometimes meant simply a cook. But in the sense in which it is here used, it probably means an inhabitant of that lubberland so humorously described in the satire quoted from Hickes by Warton, and beginning—

' Fur in see, by West Spagne,
 Is a lond ihote Cokagne

* * * * *

Al of pastees beth the wallis,
 Of fleis, of fisse. and rich met,
 The likefullist that man may et.'

Cockayne is well known in nurseries, where it is described as a city whose 'streets are paved with penny loaves, and whose houses are thatched with pancakes, and in which the pigs run about with knives and forks stuck in their backs, crying, ' Who'll eat me.' To this, no doubt, Hugh Bigod alluded in the lines given by Camden, *Brit.* 467:—

' Were I in my castle of Bungay,
 Upon the river of Waveney,
 I would ne care for the King of Cockeney.'

It occurs also in the *Romance of Merlin*, Part II., in an address of King

Unhardy is unsely, as men saith.¹
 I wol arise, and auntre it, in good faith.
 And up he ros, and softely he wente
 Unto the cradil, and in his hand it hente,
 And bar it softe unto his beddis feet.
 Soone after this the wyf hir routyng leet,
 And gan awake, and went hir forth to pisse,
 And cam agayn, and gan hir cradel mysse,
 And groped heer and ther, but sche fond noon.
 'Allas!' quod sche, 'I had almost mysgoon;
 I had almost goon to the clerkes bed,
 Ey, *benedicite*! than had I foule i-sped!
 And forth sche goth, til sche the cradil fand.
 Sche gropith alway forther with hir hand,
 And fand the bed, and thoughte nat but good,
 Bycause that the cradil by it stood,
 Nat knowyng wher sche was, for it was derk;
 But faire and wel sche creep in to the clerk,
 And lith ful stille, and wolde han caught a sleep.
 Withinne a while Johan the clerk up leep,
 And on this goode wyf leyth on ful sore;
 So mery a fytt ne hadu sche nat ful yore.
 He priketh harde and deepe, as he were mad.
 This joly lyf han this twey clerkes had,
 Til that the thridde cok² bygan to synge.
 Aleyn wax wery in the dawenyng,

Arthur to a Saracen, with whom he is about to fight. Mr. Wright is inclined to think that the term *Cockney* is a diminutive of *cock*, and that its first meaning is a puny fellow, and that Chaucer uses it here in the sense of want of spirit and courage, without intending any allusion to Cockayne.

¹ The more modern form of the proverb is, 'Nothing venture, nothing have.'

² The time indicated is shortly before dawn. The cock was supposed to crow at three stated hours. Tusser, in the *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry*, 1585, p. 126, says:—

'Cocke croweth at midnight times few above six,
 With pause to his neighbour to answer betwix.
 At three o'clock thicker; and then, as ye knowe,
 Like 'all in to mattins,' neere day they doo crowe.
At midnight, at three, and an hour yer day,
 They utter their language as well as they may.'

For he had swonken al the longe night,
 And seyde, 'Farwel, Malyn,¹ my sweete wight!
 The day is come, I may no lenger byde;
 But evermo, wher so I go or ryde,
 I am thin owen clerk, so have I seel!
 'Now, deere lemman,' quod sche, 'go, farwel!
 But or thou go, o thing I wol the telle:
 Whan that thou wendist hom-ward by the melle,
 Right at the entré of the dore byhynde
 Thou schalt a cake of half a busschel fynde,
 That was i-maked of thyn owen mele,
 Which that I hilp myn owen self to stele.
 And, goode lemman, God the save and kepe!
 And with that word almost sche gan to weepe.

Aleyn uprist, and thought, 'Er that it dawe
 I wol go crepen in by my felawe;
 And fand the cradil with his hand anon.
 'By God!' thought he, 'al wrong I have i-goon;
 My heed is toty of my swynk to nyght,
 That makes me that I ga nought aright.
 I wot wel by the cradel I have mys-go;
 Heer lith the myller and his wyf also.'
 Forth he goth in twenty devel way
 Unto the bed, ther as the miller lay.
 He wende have crope by his felaw Jon,
 And by the myller in he creep anon,
 And caught him by the nekke, and soft he spak,
 And seyde, 'Jon, thou swyneshed, awak,
 For Cristes sowle! and here a noble game;
 For, by that lord that cleped is seynt Jame,
 As I have thries in this schorte night
 Swyved the myllers doughter bolt upright,

So in *Lear*:—

'He begins at curfew, and walks till the *first cock*.'

And in *Macbeth*:—

'We were carousing till the *second cock*.'

¹ Malyn, or Malkin, appears to be an endearing, or familiar, name for Mary, like the modern Molly.

Whiles thou hast as a coward ben agast.
 'Ye, false harlot,' quod this mellere, 'hast?
 A! false traitour, false clerk!' quod he,
 'Thou schalt be deed, by Goddes dignité!
 Who durste be so bold to disparage
 My doughter, that is com of hih lynage?
 And by the throte-bolle he caught Aleyn,
 And he hent him dispitously ageyn,
 And on the nose he smot him with his fest.
 Doun ran the bloody streem upon his brest;
 And in the floor with nose and mouth to-broke
 They walweden as pigges in a poke;
 And up they goon, and doun they goon anon,
 Till that the millner stumbled at a ston,
 And doun he felle bakward on his wyf,
 That wyste nothing of this nyce stryf;
 For sche was falle asleepe a litel wight
 With Jon the clerk, that waked al the night,
 And with the falle right out of slepe sche brayde.
 'Help, holy croys of Bromholme!'¹ sche sayde,
 '*In manus tuas*,² Lord, to the I calle!
 Awake, Symond, the feend is in thin halle!
 My hert is broken! help! I am but deed!
 Ther lythe³ upon my wombe and on myn heed.

¹ Mr. Wright says that a portion of the true cross was supposed to be preserved in a reliquary, in the form of a cross, belonging to the Priory of Bromholme, in Norfolk. It was brought to England, with great ceremony, in 1223, and thenceforward became an object of pilgrimage. 'By the cross (or rood) of Bromholme,' was a common oath.

² '*In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum*,' were the last words of our Saviour on the cross, appropriately used in any sudden danger. In the notes to *Marmion* is an account of the death of a hermit. He exclaims, 'My soul longeth for the Lord. . . *In manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum, a vinculis enim mortis redemisti me, Domine veritatis. Amen.* So he yielded up the ghost the eighth day of December, anno Domini 1159, whose soul God have mercy upon. Amen.' The miller's wife, having been brought up in a convent, is supposed to have learned to say her prayers in Latin, these words forming one of the responses for *compline*.

³ The word *one* is supplied here by Speght and Tyrwhitt, but it spoils the metre, and is unnecessary. *Ther lythe* means *something lies*.

Help, Symkyn! for this false clerkes fight.¹
 This Johan stert up as fast as ever he might,
 And grasped by the walles to and fro,
 To fynde a staf; and sche sturt up also,
 And knewe the estres bet than dede Jon,
 And by the wal sche took a staf anon,
 And sawh a litel glymeryng of a light;
 For at an hool in schon the moone bright,
 And by that light she saugh hem bothe two;
 But sikirly sche wiste nat who was who,
 But as sche saugh a whit thing in hir ye.
 And whan sche gan this white thing aspye,
 Sche wend the clerk had wered a volupeer;
 And with a staf sche drough hir neer and neer,
 And wend have hit this Aleyn atte fulle,
 And smot this meller on the piled sculle,
 That down he goth, and cryeth, 'Harrow! I dye!
 This clerkes beeten him wel, and leet hym lye,
 And greyth hem wel, and take her hors anon,
 And eek here mele, and hoom anon they goon;
 And at the millen dore they tok here cake
 Of half a buisschel flour ful wel i-bake.

Thus is the prowde miller wel i-bete,
 And hath i-lost the gryndyng of the whete,
 And payed for the soper every del
 Of Aleyn and of Johan, that beten him wel;
 His wyf is swyved, and his doughter als.
 Lo! such it is a miller to be fals.
 And therto this proverbe is seyð ful soth,
 He thar nat weene¹ wel that evyl doth.
 A gylour schal himself bygiled be.
 And God, that sitest in thy magesté,
 Save al this compaignie, gret and smale,
 Thus have I quyt the miller in his tale.

¹ For *weene* Tyrwhitt substitutes *winne*, on his own authority. The meaning is, 'It behoves not him to win or acquire good, or (if we read *weene*) to expect good, who doeth evil.'

THE COKES PROLOGE.

THE Cook of Londone, whil the Reeve spak,
 For joye he thought he clawed him on the bak;¹
 ‘Ha, ha!’ quod he, ‘for Cristes passioun,
 This meller hath a scharp conclusioun
 Upon his argument of herburgage.
 Wel seyde Salomon in his langage,
 Ne bryng nat every man into thyn hous,²
 For herburgage by night is perilous.
 Wel aught a man avised for to be
 Whom that he brought into his pryvyté.
 I pray to God so gyf my body care,
 Gif ever, siththen I highte Hogge of Ware,
 Herd I a better miller set a-werke;
 He hadde a jape of malice in the derke.
 But God forbede that we stynten heere,
 And therfore if ye vouchesauf to heere
 A tale of me that am a pover man,
 I wol yow telle as wel as I kan
 A litel jape that fel in oure cité.’

Oure Host answerde and seyde, ‘I graunt it the.
 Now telle on, Roger, and loke it be good;
 For many a pastey hastow lete blood,
 And many a Jakk of Dover³ hastow sold,
 That hath be twyes hoot and twyes cold.
 Of many a pylgrym hastow Cristes curs;
 For thy persly they faren yet the wors,
 That they have eten with the stubbil goos;
 For in thy schoppe is many a flye loos.
 Now tell on, gentil Roger by thy name,
 But yit I pray the be nought wroth for game;

¹ For the joy he experienced in his mind, he could scarcely forbear clapping the reeve on the back.

² Eccius. xi. 31.

³ Tyrwhitt does not understand this line. [*Jack of Dover* was probably a sea-fish, familiar to Canterbury pilgrims, obviously eaten when hot.]

A man may seye ful sothe in game and pley.¹
 'Thow saist ful soth,' quod Roger, 'by my fey!
 But soth play quad play, as the Flemyng saith;²
 And therfore, Herry Baillif, by thy faith,
 Be thou nat wroth, or we departe her,
 Though that my tale be of an hostyler.
 But natheles I wol not telle it yit,
 But or we departe it schal be quyt.'
 And therwithal he lowh and made chere,
 And seyde his tale, as ye schal after heere.

THE COKES TALE.

A PRENTYS dwelled whilom in oure citee,
 And of a craft of vitailleurs was he;
 Gaylard he was, as goldfynch in the schawe,
 Broun as a bery, and a propre felawe,
 With lokkes blak, and kempt ful fetously.
 Dauncen he cowde wel and prately,
 That he was cleped Perkyn Revellour.³
 He was as ful of love and paramour
 As is the honycombe of hony swete;
 Wel were the wenche that mighte him meete.
 At every bridale wold he synge and hoppe;⁴
 He loved bet the taverne than the schoppe.

For whan ther eny rydyng was in Cheepe,⁵
 Out of the schoppe thider wolde he lepe,
 And tyl he hadde al that sight i-seyn,
 And daunced wel, he nold nat come ageyn;

¹ This line, as well as the next but two, is omitted in MS. Harl., which reads *by my faith* in the ensuing line, to make it rhyme with that which follows.—W.

² Play in earnest is bad play. Tyrwhitt quotes Sir John Harrington to the same purpose—'Soth bourde is no bourde.'

³ See *ante*, p. 220, note 2.

⁴ This and the following line are omitted in MS. Harl.—W.

⁵ There were sometimes justs in Cheapside.—Holingshed, vol. ii. p. 348. But perhaps any procession may be meant.—T

And gadred him a meyné of his sort,
 To hoppe and synge, and make such disport.
 And ther they setten stevene for to meete,
 To pleyen atte dys in such a strett,
 For in the toun ne was ther no prentys
 That fairer cowde caste a peyre dys
 Than Perkyn couthe, and therto he was free
 Of his dispençe, in place of pryvyté.
 That fand his mayster wel in his chaffare,
 For often tyme he fond his box ful bare.
 For such a joly prentys revelour,
 That haunteth dys, revel, or paramour,
 His maister schal it in his schoppe abyge,
 Al have he no part of the mynstralcyge.
 For thefte and ryot be convertyble,
 Al can they pley on giterne or rubible.
 Revel and trouthe, as in a lowe degré,
 They ben ful wroth al day,¹ as ye may see.
 This joly prentys with his mayster bood,
 Til he was oute neygh of his prentysshood,
 Al were he snybbyd bothe erly and late,
 And som tyme lad with revel into Newgate.
 But atte laste his mayster him bythought
 Upon a day, whan he his papyr² sought,
 Of a proverbe, that saith this same word,
 Wel bette is roten appul out of hord,
 Than that it rote al the remenaunt.
 So fareth it by a ryotous servaunt;
 It is ful lasse harm to late him pace,
 Than he schend al the servauntes in the place.
 Therefore his mayster gaf him acquitaunce,³
 And bad him go, with sorwe and with meschaunce.

¹ The meaning is not obvious. It may be, theft and riot are convertible terms (always accompany one another), however pleasant and gay they may appear outwardly; while, on the other hand, revelry and truth (or honesty) are every day seen to be at enmity, particularly in persons of low degree, who have not the means of maintaining the expense.

² His account books. ³ The MS. Harl. reads *acqueyntaunce*.—W.

And thus the joly prentys had his leve.
 Now let hym ryot al the night or leve.
 And for ther is no thef withowten a lowke,
 'That helpeth him to wasten and to sowke
 Of that he bribe can, or borwe may,
 Anon he sent his bedde and his aray
 Unto a compere of his owen sort,
 That loved dis, and revel, and disport;
 And had a wyf, that held for contenaunce²
 A schoppe, and swyved for hire sustenaunce.³

Eye theron, it is so foule, I wil nowe telle no forther,
 For schame of the harlotrie that seweth after;
 A velany it were thare of more to spelle,
 Bot of a knyht and his sonnes my tale I wil forthe telle.

THE COKES TALE OF GAMELYN.

[IN the Harleian and other good MSS., the tale of Gamelyn is inserted in this place; and it is retained in this edition as a curious specimen of a species of composition long popular among the Anglo-Saxon peasantry. In such rude ballads as this, it was their delight to celebrate the prowess of their outlawed countrymen, who, in the fastnesses of the extensive forests which then covered the northern parts of the island, set at nought the authority of their Norman conquerors, bid defiance to the odious forest laws, and wreaked their vengeance upon the Norman prelates who had been intruded into the sees and abbeys in the place of the rightful Saxon occupants. To this

¹ The last seven lines are omitted in MS. Harl., but they are evidently genuine.—W.

² As a blind to save appearances.

³ Here *The Cokes Tale* ends abruptly. It seems probable, as Tyrwhitt supposes, that Chaucer's more mature judgment convinced him that two such tales as the Miller's and the Reeve's were sufficient at a time; and that he intended to cancel the Coke's prologue and tale, and to proceed at once to *The Man of Lawes Prologue*.

national feeling is to be attributed the extraordinary popularity of Robin Hood, Adam Bell, Clym of the Clough, and other bold outlaws of the same stamp, among whom must be classed Gamelyn. Indeed, he is associated, under the name of 'young Gamwel,' with the heroic Earl of Huntingdon, in the ballad of *Robin Hood and the Stranger*, in Ritson's collection. In all these poems the grand merit of the hero is his daring contempt of the law, a trait by no means characteristic of the Saxons, but the result of their peculiar position as a brave and powerful, though conquered, people, governed by a foreign aristocracy.

The verse of this tale is that of the other spurious pieces which have been interpolated to supply deficiencies in *The Canterbury Tales*, and is never used by Chaucer. It is extremely irregular, but the rhythm or cadence resembles that of the verse much used by Surrey, and is obtained by employing an equal number of accented syllables in every line, while the unaccented ones are added or omitted, almost *ad libitum*; and by making an unvarying pause or *cæsura* at the middle of every verse.

Though possessed of great merit, and displaying much of the quaint humour so congenial to the English mind, this tale has none of the characteristics of Chaucer's manner; and the fact that when the host of the Tabard, in the prologue to *The Manciple's Tale*, calls upon the cook to perform his part of the agreement, he makes no reference to his having already told a tale, is decisive against its genuineness. If a conjecture may be hazarded, it seems not improbable that the poet had selected it to form the groundwork of a tale which he intended to put into the mouth of the yeoman or some other of his lower personages; and that, being found among his loose papers after his death, it was here introduced to fill a vacant space, by the person who arranged the tales in their present order. If this be so, it is a curious fact that Chaucer's great successor should have confirmed his judgment of its capabilities by selecting it as the foundation of the comedy of *As you Like it*.]

And seyde, 'Sir, for Goddes love, ne dismay you
nought;

God may do bote of bale¹ that is now i-wrought.'
Than spak the goode knight, sik ther he lay,
'Boote of bale God may sende, I wot it is no nay;
But I byseke you, knightes, for the love of me,
Goth and dresseth my lond among my sones thre.
And, sires, for the love of God, deleth hem nat amys,
And forgetith nat Gamelyn, my yonge sone that is.
Taketh heed to that on, as wel as to that other;
Selde ye see ony eyr helpen his brother.'

Tho leete they the knight lyen that was nought
in hele,
And wenten in to counseil his londes for to dele;
For to delen hem alle to oon, that was her thought,
And for Gamelyn was yongest, he should have nought.
Al the lond that ther was they dalten it in two,
And leeten Gamelyn the yonge withoute lond go,
And ech of hem seyde to other ful lowde, [cowde.²
His bretheren might geve him lond whan he good
Whan they hadde deled the lond at here wille,
They come agein to the knight ther he lay fulstille,
And tolden him anon right how they hadden wrought;
And the knight there he lay liked it right nought.
Than seyde the knight, 'I sware by seynt Martyn,³
For al that ye have y-doon yit is the lond myn;

¹ God may bring good out of evil. This is a very usual expression in the ballads of the school of Robin Hood. Thus, in *Robin Hood and Guy of Gisborne*, when Little John's bow breaks, as he is about to shoot at the Sheriff of Nottingham, he exclaims:—

'Woe worth, woe worth thee, wicked wood,
That ever thou grew on a tree!
For now this day thou art *my bale*,
My boote when thou shold be.'

² When he should be of age to know what was right.

³ Saint Martin was a Hungarian by birth, and served in the army under Constantius and Julian. He is represented in pictures as a Roman knight on horseback, with his sword dividing his cloak into two pieces, one of which he gives to a beggar. He was a strenuous opponent of the Arians, and died at Tours, where his relics were preserved and honoured.

For Goddes love, neyheours, stondeth alle stille,
 And I wil dele my lond after my wille.
 Johan, myn eldeste sone, shall have plowes¹ fyve,
 That was my fadres heritage whil he was on lyve;
 And my myddeleste sone fyf plowes of lond,
 That I halp for to gete with my right hond;
 And al myn other purchas of londes and leedes
 That I byquethe Gamelyn, and alle my goode steedes.
 And I byseke yow, goode men, that lawe conne of
 londe,

For Gamelynes love, that my queste stonde.²
 Thus dalte the knight his lond by his day,
 Right on his deth bed sik ther he lay;
 And sone aftirward he lay stoon stille,
 And deyde whan tyme com, as it was Cristes wille.
 And anon as he was deed, and under gras i-grave,
 Sone the elder brother gyled the yonge knave,³
 He took into his hond his lond and his leede,
 And Gamelyn himselfe to clothen and to feede.
 He clothed him and fed him yvel and eek wrothe,
 And leet his londes for-fare and his houses bothe,
 His parkes and his woodes, and dede nothing wel,
 And seththen he it abought on his faire fel.⁴
 So longe was Gamelyn in his brotheres halle,
 For the strengest of good wil they doutiden him alle;
 Ther was non therinne nowther yong ne olde
 That wolde wraththe Gamelyn, were he never so bolde.
 Gamelyn stood on a day in his brotheres yerde,
 And bygan with his hond to handlen his berde;⁴
 He thought on his londes that layen unsawe,
 And his faire okes that down were i-drawe;
 His parkes were i-broken, and his deer byreeved;
 Of alle his goode steedes noon was him byleved;

¹ Meaning a *plough-land*, a common mode of measurement down to the reigns of Elizabeth and James the First.

² German, *knabe*, boy.

³ He paid or suffered for it on his own head.

⁴ His growing beard reminded him that he was come to man's estate, and suggested the thoughts which follow.

His howses were unhilid and ful yvel dight.
 Tho thoughte Gamelyn it wente nought aright.
 Afterward cam his brother walkynge thare,
 And seyde to Gamelyn, 'Is our mete yare?'
 Tho wraththed him Gamelyn, and swor by Goddes book,
 'Thou shalt go bake thiself, I wil nought be thy cook.'
 'How? brother Gamelyn, how answerest thou now?
 Thou spake never such a word as thou dost now.'
 'By my faith,' seyde Gamelyn, 'now me thinketh
 neede,

Of alle the harmes that I have I tok never ar heede.
 My parkes ben to-broken, and my deer byreved,
 Of myn armure and my steedes nought is me bileved;
 Al that my fader me byquath al goth to schame,
 And therfor have thou Goddes curs, brother, by thy
 name.'

Than byspak his brother, that rape was of rees,¹
 'Stond stille, gadelyng, and hold right thy pees;
 Thow schalt be fayn for to have thy mete and thy
 wede;

What spekest thou, Gamelyn, of lond other of leede?
 Thanne seyde Gamelyn, the child² that was ying,
 'Cristes curs mot he have that clepeth me gadelyng!
 I am no worse gadelyng, ne no worse wight,
 But born of a lady, and geten of a knight.'
 Ne durst he nat to Gamelyn ner a foote go,
 But clepide to him his men, and seyde to hem tho,
 'Goth and beteth this boy, and reveth him his wyt,
 And lat him leren another tyme to answeere me bet.'
 Thanne seyde the child, yonge Gamelyn,
 'Cristes curs mot thou have, brother art thou myn;
 And if I schal algate be beten anon,
 Cristes curs mot thou have, but thou be that oon.'
 And anon his brother in that grete hete
 Made his men to fette staves Gamelyn to bete.
 Whan that everich of hem a staf had i-nome,
 Gamelyn was war anon tho he seigh hem come;

¹ Deprived of reason for anger.

² See *ante*, p. 197, note 3.

Tho Gamelyn seyh hem come, he loked over al,
 And was war of a pestel stood under a wal;
 Gamelyn was light of foot and thider gan he lepe,
 And drof alle his brotheres men right on an hepe.
 He loked as a wilde lyoun, and leyde on good woon;
 Tho his brother say that, he bigan to goon;
 He fley up intil a loft, and schette the dore fast.
 Thus Gamelyn with the pestel made hem alle agast.
 Some for Gamelynes love and some for his eyghe,
 Alle they drowe by halves, tho he gan to pleyghe.
 'What! how now?' seyde Gamelyn, 'evel mot ye thee!
 Wil ye bygynne kontek, and so sone flee?'
 Gamelyn sought his brother, whider he was flowe,
 And saugh wher he loked out at a wyndowe.
 'Brother,' sayde Gamelyn, 'com a litel ner,
 And I wil teche the a play atte bokeler.'
 His brother him answerde, and swor by seynt Rycher,¹
 'Whil the pestel is in thin hond, I wil come no neer:
 Brother, I wil make thy pees, I swere by Cristes ore;
 Cast away the pestel, and wraththe the nomore.'
 'I mot neede,' sayde Gamelyn, 'wraththe me at oones,
 For thou wolde make thy men to breke myne boones,
 Ne had I hadde mayn and might in myn armes,
 To have i-put hem fro me, he wolde have do me harmes.'
 'Gamelyn,' sayde his brother, 'be thou nought wroth,
 For to seen the have harm it were me right loth;
 I ne dide it nought, brother, but for a fondyng,
 For to loken or thou were strong and art so ying.'
 'Com adoun than to me, and graunte me my bone,
 Of thing I wil the aske, and we schul saught sone.'
 Doun than cam his brother, that fykil was and felle,
 And was swithe sore agast of the pestelle.

¹ 'By Saint Richard,' was a favourite oath with the outlaws of Robin Hood's stamp, probably because of his Saxon extraction. 'Saint Richard, King and Confessor, was sonne to Lotharius, King of Kent, who, for the love of Christ, taking upon him a long peregrination, went to Rome for devotion to that sea (see), and, on his way homeward, died at Lucca, about the year of Christ 750, where his body is kept until this day, with great veneration, in the oratory and chappell of St. Frigidian, and adorned with an epitaph both in verse and prose.'—*Eng. Martyrologe*, 1608.

He seyde, ' Brother Gamelyn, aske me thy boone,
 And lōke thou me blame but I graunte sone.'
 'Thanne seyde Gamelyn, ' Brother, i-wys,
 And we schulle ben at oon, thou most me graunte this,
 Al that my fader me byquath whil he was on lyve,
 Thou most do me it have, gif we schul nat stryve.'
 ' That schalt thou have, Gamelyn, I swere by Cristes
 ore! [have more;
 Al that thi fader the byquath, though thou woldest
 Thy lond, that lyth laye, ful wel it schal be sowe,
 And thyn howses reysed up, that ben leyd so low.'
 Thus seyde the knight to Gamelyn with mowthe,
 And thought eek of falsnes, as he wel couthe.
 The knight thought on tresoun, and Gamelyn on noon,
 And went and kist his brother, and than they were
 at oon.

Allas! yonge Gamelyn, nothing he ne wiste
 With which a false tresoun his brother him kiste.

Litheth, and lestneth, and holdeth your tonge,
 And ye schul heere talkyng of Gamelyn the yonge.
 Ther was ther bysiden cryed a wrastlyng,¹
 And therfor ther was sette up a ram and a ryng;²
 And Gamelyn was in good wil to wende therto,
 For to preuen his might what he cowthe do.
 ' Brother,' seyde Gamelyn, ' by seynt Richer,
 Thou most lene me to nyght a litel courser
 That is freisch to the spore, on for to ryde;
 I most on an erande, a litel her byside.'
 ' By God!' seyd his brother, ' of steedes in my stalle
 Go and chese the the best, and spare non of alle.
 Of steedes or of coursers that stonden hem bisyde;
 And tel me, goode brother, whider thou wolt ryde.'
 ' Her byside, brother, is cryed a wrastlyng,
 And therfor schal be set up a ram and a ryng;
 Moche worschip it were, brother, to us alle,
 Might I the ram and the ryng bryng home to this halle.'

¹ A wrestling match was cried or proclaimed beside that place.

² See *ante*, p. 100, note 2.

A steede ther was sadeled smertely and skeet ;
 Gamelyn did a paire spores fast on his feet,
 He set his foot in the styrop, the steede he bystrood,
 And toward the wrastelyng the yonge child rood.
 Tho Gamelyn the yonge was ride out at the gate,
 The fals knight his brother lokked it after thate,
 And bysoughte Jhesu Crist that is heven kyng
 He mighte breke his nekke in that wrastlyng.
 As sone as Gamelyn com ther the place was,
 He lighte doun of his steede, and stood on the gras,
 And ther he herd a frankeleyn wayloway syng,
 And bigan bitterly his hondes for to wryng.
 'Goode man,' seyde Gamelyn, 'why makestow this fare?
 Is ther no man that may you helpe out of this care?'
 'Allas!' seyde this frankleyn, 'that ever was I bore!
 For tweye stalworthe sones I wene that I have lore ;
 A champioun is in the place, that hath i-wrought me
 sorwe,

For he hath slayn my two sones, but if God hem borwe.
 I wold geve ten pound, by Jhesu Crist! and more,
 With the nones I fand a man to handil him sore.'
 'Goode man,' sayde Gamelyn, 'wilt thou wel doon,
 Hold myn hors, whil my man draweth of my schoon,
 And help my man to kepe my clothes and my steede,
 And I wil into place go, to loke if I may speede.'
 'By God!' sayde the frankeleyn, 'anon it schal be doon ;
 I wil myself be thy man, to drawen of thy schoon,
 And wende thou into the place, Jhesu Crist the
 speede !

And drede not of thy clothes, nor of thy goode steede.'

Barfoot and ungert Gamelyn in cam,
 Alle that weren in the place heede of him they nam,
 How he durst aunte him of him to doon his might
 That was so doughty champioun in wrastlyng and in
 Up sterte the champioun raply and anoon, [fight.
 Toward yonge Gamelyn he bigan to goon,
 And sayde, 'Who is thy fader and who is thy sire ?
 For sothe thou art a gret fool, that thou come hire.'

Gamelyn answerde the championn tho,
'Thou knewe wel my fader whil he couthe go,
Whiles he was on lyve, by seint Martyn!
Sir Johan of Boundys was his name, and I Gamelyn.'
'Felaw,' seyde the championn, 'al so mot I thryve,
I knew wel thy fader, whil he was on lyve;
And thiself, Gamelyn, I wil that thou it heere,
Whil thou were a yong boy a moche schrewe thou
were.'

Than seyde Gamelyn, and swor by Cristes ore,
'Now I am older woxe, thou schalt me fynd a more.'
'Be God!' sayde the championn, 'welcome mote thou
be!

Come thou ones in myn hond, schalt thou never the.'
It was wel withinne the night, and the moone schon,
Whan Gamelyn and the championn togider gon to
goon.¹

The championn caste tornes² to Gamelyn that was
prest,

And Gamelyn stood stille, and bad him doon his best.
Thanne seyde Gamelyn to the championn,

'Thou art fast aboute to brynge me adoun;

Now I have i-proved many tornes of thyne,

Thow most,' he seyde, 'proven on or tuo of myne.'

Gamelyn to the championn yede smartly anon,

Of alle the tornes that he cowthe he schewed him but
oon,

And kast him on the left syde, that thre ribbes to-brak,

And therto his oon arm, that gaf a gret crak.

Thanne seyde Gamelyn smertly anoon,

'Schal it be holde for a cast,³ or elles for noon?'

'By God,' seyde the championn, 'whether that it bee,

He that comes ones in thin hand schal he never thee!'

¹ Began to go.

² That is, made many attempts to trip him up and throw him, which Gamelyn was, however, prepared for, (prest) and evaded.

³ Spoken ironically, 'Shall it be counted for a fall?'

Than seyde the frankeleyn, that had his sones there,
 'Blessed be thou, Gamelyn, that ever thou bore
 were!'

The frankleyn seyde to the champion, of him stood
 him noon eye,¹

'This is yonge Gamelyn that taughte the this pleye,'
 Agein answerd the champion, that liked nothing
 welle,

'He is a lither mayster, and his pley is right felle ;
 Sith I wrastled first, it is i-go ful yore,
 But I was nevere my lyf handled so sore.'

Gamelyn stood in the place allone withoute serk,
 And seyde, 'If there be eny mo, lat hem come to werk ;
 The champion that peyned him to werke so sore,
 It seemeth by his continuance that he wil nomore.'

Gamelyn in the place stood as stille as stoon,
 For to abyde wrastelyng, but there com noon ;
 Ther was noon with Gamelyn wolde wrastle more,
 For he handled the champion so wonderly sore.

Two gentilmen ther were yemede the place,
 Comen to Gamelyn, God give him goode grace !
 And sayde to hem, 'Do on thyn hosen and thy schoon,
 For sothe at this tyme this feire is i-doon.'

And than seyde Gamelyn, 'So mot I wel fare,
 I have nought yet halvendel sold up my ware.'

Tho seyde the champion, 'So brouk I my sweere,
 He is a fool that thereof buyeth, thou selleth it so
 deere.'

Tho sayde the frankeleyn that was in moche care,
 'Felaw,' he seyde, 'why lakkest thou his ware?
 By seynt Jame in Galys,² that many man hath sought,
 Yet it is to good cheep that thou hast i-bought.'
 Tho that wardeynes were of that wrastlyng,
 Come and broughte Gamelyn the ram and the ryng,
 And seyden, 'Have, Gamelyn, the ryng and the ram,
 For the best wrasteler that ever here cam.'

Means, apparently, 'Of him he stood in no awe.'

² See *ante*, p. 97, note 2.

Thus wan Gamelyn the ram and the ryng,
 And went with moche joye home in the mornyng.
 His brother seiþ wher he cam with the grete rowte,
 And bad schitte the gate, and holde him withoute,
 The porter of his lord was ful sore agast,
 And stert anon to the gate, and lokked it fast.

Now litheth, and lestneth, bothe yong and olde,
 And ye schul heere gamen of Gamelyn the bolde.
 Gamelyn come therto for to have comen in,
 And thanne was it i-schet faste with a pyn;
 Than seyde Gamelyn, 'Porter, undo the yate,
 For many good mannes sone stondeth therate.'
 Than answerd the porter, and swor by Goddes berde,
 'Thow ne schalt, Gamelyn come into this yerde.'
 'Thow lixt,' sayde Gamelyn, 'so browke I my chyn !'
 He smot the wyket with his foot, and brak away the
 The porter seyþ tho it might no better be, [pyn.
 He sette foot on erthe, and fast bigan to flee.
 'By my faith,' seyde Gamelyn, 'that travail is i-lore,
 For I am of foot as lighte as thou, though thow had-
 dest swore.'

Gamelyn overtook the porter, and his teene wrak,
 And gert him in the neckke, that the bon to-brak,
 And took him by that oon arm, and threw him in a
 welle,

Seven fadmen it was deep, as I have herd telle.
 Whan Gamelyn the yonge thus hadde pleyed his play,
 Alle that in the yerde were drewen hem away;
 They dredden him ful sore, for werkes that he wroughte,
 And for the faire company that he thider broughte.
 Gamelyn yede to the gate, and leet it up wyde;
 He leet in alle maner men that gon in wold or ryde,
 And seyde, 'Ye be welcome withouten eny greeve,
 For we wiln be maistres heer, and aske no man leve.
 Yestirday I lefte,' seyde yonge Gamelyn,
 'In my brother seller fyve tonne of wyn;
 I wil not that this compaignye parten a-twynne,
 And ye wil doon after me, while eny sope is thrynne;

And if my brother grucche, or make foul cheere,
Other for spense of mete or drynk that we spenden
heere,

I am oure catour, and bere oure aller purs,
He schal have for his grucchyng seint Maries curs.
My brother is a nyggoun, I swer by Cristes ore,
And we wil spende largely that he hath spared yore;
And who that maketh grucchyng that we here dwelle,
He schal to the porter into the draw-welle.'
Seven dayes and seven nyght Gamelyn held his feste,
With moche myrth and solas that was ther and no
In a litel toret his brother lay i-steke, [cheste;
And sey him wasten his good, but durst he not speke.
Erly on a mornyng on the eighte day
The gestes come to Gamelyn and wolde gon here way.
'Lordes,' seyde Gamelyn, 'wil ye so hye?
Al the wyn is not yet y-dronke, so brouk I myn ye.'
Gamelyn in his herte was he ful wo,
Whan his gestes took her leve from him for to go;
He wold they had lenger abide, and they seyde nay,
But bitaughte Gamelyn God, and good day.
Thus made Gamelyn his fest, and brought it wel to
ende,

And after his gestys took leve to wende.

Litheth, and lestneth, and holdeth youre tonge,
And ye schul heere gamen of Gamelyn the yonge.
Herkneth, lordynges, and lesteneth aright, [dight,
Whan alle the gestes were goon how Gamelyn was
Al the whil that Gamelyn heeld his mangerye,
His brother thoughton him bewreke with his treccherie.
Tho Gamelyns gestes were riden and i-gooun,
Gamelyn stood allone, frendes had he noon;
Tho after full soone withinne a litel stounde,
Gamelyn was i-take and ful hard ibounde.
Forth com the fals knight out of the selleer,
To Gamelyn his brother he yede ful neer,
And sayde to Gamelyn, 'Who made the so bold
For to stroye my stoor of myn houshold?'

Brother,' seyde Gamelyn, 'wraththe the right nought,
For it is many day i-gon siththen it was bought ;
For, brother, thou hast i-had, by seynt Richer,
Of fiftene plowes of lond this sixtene yer,
And of alle the beestes thou hast forth bred,
That my fader me biquath on his deth bed ;
Of al this sixtene yer I geve the the prow
For the mete and the drynk that we have spende now.'
Thanne seyde the fals knyght, evel mot he the,
'Herkne, brother Gamelyn, what I wol geve the ;
For of my body, brother, geten heir have I noon,
I wil make the myn heir, I swere by seint Johan.'
'*Par ma foy!*' sayde Gamelyn, 'and if it so be,
And thou thenke as thou seyst, God yelde it the !'
Nothing wiste Gamelyn of his brotheres gyle ;
Therefore he him bigyled in a litel while.
'Gamelyn,' seyde he, 'o thing I the telle ;
Tho thou threwe my porter in the draw-welle,
I swor in that wraththe, and in that grete moot,
That thou schuldest be bounde bothe hand and foot ;
Therefore I the biseche, brother Gamelyn,
Lat me nought be forsworn, as brother art thou myn ;
Lat me bynde the now bothe hand and feet,
For to holde myn avow, as I the biheet.'
'Brother,' sayde Gamelyn, 'al so mot I the !
Thou schalt not be forsworen for the love of me.'
Tho made they Gamelyn to sitte, might he nat stonde,
Tyl they had him bounde bothe foot and honde.
The fals knight his brother of Gamelyn was agast,
And sent afir feteres to feteren him fast.
His brother made lesynges on him ther he stood,
And told hem that comen in that Gamelyn was wood.
Gamelyn stood to a post bounden in the halle,
Tho that comen in ther loked on him alle.
Ever stood Gamelyn even upright ;
But mete ne drynk had ne non neither day ne night.
Than seyde Gamelyn, 'Brother, by myn hals,
Now I have aspied thou art a party fals ;

Had I wist that tresoun that thou haddest y-founde,
I wolde have geve the strokes or I had be bounde!
Gamelyn stood bounden stille as eny stoon;
Two dayes and two nightes mete had he noon.
Thanne seyde Gamelyn, that stood y-bounde stronge,
'Adam spenser, me thinkth I faste to longe;
Adam spenser, now I bysech the,
For the mochel love my fader loved the,
Yf thou may come to the keyes, lese me out of bond,
And I wil parte with the of my free lond.'
Thanne seyde Adam, that was the spencer,
'I have served thy brother this sixtene yeer,
If I leete the goon out of this bour,
He wolde say afterward I were a traytour.'
'Adam,' sayde Gamelyn, 'so brouk I myn hals!
Thou schalt fynde my brother atte laste fals;
Therfor, brother Adam, louse me out of bond,
And I wil parte with the of my free lond.'
'Up swich a forward,' seyde Adam, 'i-wys,
I wil do therto al that in me is.'
'Adam,' seyde Gamelyn, 'al so mot I the,
I wol hold the covenant, and thou wil me.'
Anon as Adames lord to bedde was i-goon,
Adam took the keyes, and leet Gamelyn out anon;
He unlokked Gamelyn bothe hand and feet,
In hope of avauncement that he him byheet.
Than seyde Gamelyn, 'Thanked be Goddes sonde!
Now I am loosed bothe foot and honde;
Had I now eten and dronken aright,
Ther is noon in this hous schuld bynde me this night.'
Adam took Gamelyn, as stille as ony stoon,
And ladde him into spence rapely and anon,
And sette him to soper right in a prive stede,
And bad him do gladly, and Gamelyn so dede.
Anon as Gamelyn hadde eten wel and fyn,
And therto y-dronke wel of the rede wyn,
'Adam,' seyde Gamelyn, 'what is now thy reed?
Wher I go to my brother and girde of his heed?'

'Gamelyn,' seyde Adam, 'it schal not be so;
I can teche the a reed that is worth the two.
I wot wel for sothe that this is no nay,
We schul have a mangery right on Sondag;
Abbotes and priours many heer schal be,
And other men of holy chirche, as I telle the; [fast,
Thow schalt stonde up by the post as thou were hond-
And I schal leve hem unloke, away thou may hem cast,
Whan that they have eten and waisschen here hondes,
Thou schalt biseke hem alle to bryng the out of bondes;
And if they wille borwe the, that were good game,
Then were thou out of prisoun, and I out of blame;
And if everich of hem say unto us nay,
I schal do another thing, I swere by this day!
Thou schalt have a good staf and I wil have another,
And Cristes curs have that oon that faileth that other!'
'Ye, for Gode!' sayde Gamelyn, 'I say it for me,
If I fayle on my syde, yvel mot I the!
If we schul algate assoile hem of here synne,
Warne me, brother Adam, whan I schal bygynne.'
'Gamelyn,' seyde Adam, 'by seynte Charité,
I wil warne the byforne whan that it schal be;
Whan I twynk on the, loke for to goon,
And cast away the feteres, and com to me anoon.'
'Adam,' seide Gamelyn, 'blessed be thy bones!
That is a good counseil gevyng for the nones;
If they werne me thanne to brynge me out of bendes,
I wol sette goode strokes right on here lendes.'
Tho the Sondag was i-come, and folk to the feste,
Faire they were welcomed bothe lest and meste;
And ever as they atte halle dore comen in,
They caste their eye on yonge Gamelyn.
The fals knight his brother, ful of trechery,
Alle the gestes that ther wer atte mangery,
Of Gamelyn his brother he tolde hem with mouthe
Al the harm and the schame that he telle couthe.
Tho they were served of messes tuo or thre,
Than seyde Gamelyn, 'How serve ye me?

It is nought wel served, by God that al made!
That I sytte fastyng, and other men make glade.'
The fals knight his brother, ther that he stood,
Tolde alle his gestes that Gamelyn was wood;
And Gamelyn stood stille, and answerde nought,
But Adames wordes he held in his thought.
Tho Gamelyn gan speke dolfully withalle
To the gret lordes that saten in the halle:
'Lordes,' he seyde, 'for Cristes passioun,
Helpeth brynge Gamelyn out of prisoun.'
Than seyde an abbot, sorwe on his cheeke!
'He schal have Cristes curs and seynte Maries eeke,
That the out of prisoun beggeth other borwe,
But ever worthe hem wel that doth the moche sorwe.'
After that abbot than spak another,
'I wold thin heed were of, though thou were my bro-
Alle that the borwe, foule mot hem falle!' [ther!
Thus they seyde alle that were in the halle.
Than seyde a priour, yvel mot he thryve!
'It is moche skathe, boy, that thou art on lyve.'
'Ow,' seyde Gamelyn, 'so brouk I my bon?
Now I have aspyed that freendes have I non.
Cursed mot he worthe bothe fleisch and blood,
That ever do priour or abbot ony good!'
Adam the spencer took up the cloth,
And loked on Gamelyn, and say that he was wroth;
Adam on the pantrye litel he thought,
But tuo goode staves to halle dore he brought.
Adam loked on Gamelyn, and he was war anoon,
And caste away the feteres, and he bigan to goon:
Tho he com to Adam, he took that oo staf,
And bygan to worche, and goode strokes gaf.
Gamelyn cam into the halle, and the spencer bothe,
And loked hem aboute, as they had be wrothe;
Gamelyn sprengeth holy-water with an oken spire,
That some that stooode upright fel in the fire.
Ther was no lewede man that in the halle stood,
That wolde do Gamelyn eny thing but good,

But stood besyde, and leet hem bothe werche,
 For they hadde no rewthe of men of holy cherche;¹
 Abbot or priour, monk or chanoun,
 That Gamelyn overtok, anon they yeeden down.
 Ther was non of hem alle that with his staf mette,
 That he made him overthrowe and quytt him his dette.
 'Gamelyn,' seyde Adam, 'for seynte Charité,
 Pay large lyverey, for the love of me,
 And I wil kepe the dore, so ever here I masse!
 Er they ben assoyled ther shan noon passe.'
 'Dowt the nought,' seyde Gamelyn, 'whil we ben in
 feere,
 Kep thou wel the dore, and I wol werche heere;
 Stere the, good Adam, and lat ther noon flee,
 And we schul telle largely how many ther be.'
 'Gamelyn,' seyde Adam, 'do hem but good;
 They ben men of holy chirche, draw of hem no blood,
 Save wel the croune,² and do hem non harmes,
 But brek bothe her legges and siththen here armes.'
 Thus Gamelyn and Adam wroughte right fast,
 And pleyden with the monkes, and made hem agast.

¹ The hatred of churchmen, of holy water, and of everything connected with the church, observable in all the ballads of this class, is probably in part owing to the fact alluded to in the introduction to this tale, viz., that William the Conqueror and his immediate successors systematically removed the Saxon bishops and abbots, and intruded Normans in their stead into all the valuable preferments in England. But there were also other grounds for the odium in which these foreign prelates were held. Sharing in the duties of the common law judges, they participated in the aversion with which the functionaries of the law were naturally regarded by outlaws and robbers; just as the parson who, at the present day, combines the magisterial with the sacerdotal office, is generally an object of special dislike to thieves and poachers. Numerous examples of the hostility of the outlaws to the higher clergy and officers of the law will occur to every reader of the ballads of Robin Hood. For instance, in the *Lytel Geste*, already quoted, Robin thus directs Little John:—

'These bysshopes and these archebysshoppes,
 Ye shall them beete and bynde;
 The high sheryfe of Notynghame,
 Hym holde ye in your mynde.'

² He says, ironically, 'Do not break their heads,' because of the tonsure, the peculiar mark of the clerical profession.

Thider they come rydyng jolily with swaynes,
 But hom agen they were i-lad in eartes and in waynes,
 Tho they hadden al y-don, than seyde a gray frere,¹
 'Allas! sire abbot, what did we now heere?
 Tho that comen hider, it was a colde reed,
 Us hadde ben better at home with water and breed.'
 Whil Gamelyn made ordres² of monkes and frere,
 Ever stood his brother, and made foul chere;
 Gamelyn up with his staff, that he wel knew,
 And gert him in the nekke, that he overthrew;
 A litel above the girdel the rigge-bon to-barst;
 And sette him in the feteres ther he sat arst.
 'Sitte ther, brother,' sayde Gamelyn,
 'For to colyn thy blood, as I dide myn.'
 As swithe as they hadde i-wroken hem on here foon,
 They askeden watir and wisschen anoon,
 What some for here love and some for awe,
 Alle the servantz served hem of the beste lawe.

The scherreve was thennes but a fyve myle,
 And al was y-told him in a litel while,
 How Gamelyn and Adam had doon a sory rees,
 Bounden and i-wounded men agein the kinges pees;
 Tho bigan sone strif for to wake,
 And the scherref aboute cast Gamelyn for to take.

Now lytheth and lestneth, so God gif you goode fyn!
 And ye schul heere good game of yonge Gamelyn.
 Four and twenty yonge men, that heelden hem ful
 bolde,

Come to the schirref and seyde that they wolde
 Gamelyn and Adam fetten away.
 The scherref gaf hem leve, soth as I you say;
 They hyeden faste, wold they nought bylynne,
 Til they come to the gate, ther Gamelyn was inne.

¹ A Franciscan, or friar minor, the habit of this order being grey.

² This expression seems to mean primarily, took order for the monks and friars, or disposed of them; but it appears to have a secondary ironical allusion to the ceremony of ordination, which consists in the *laying on of hands*, and is as much as to say, 'While Gamelyn gave these monks and friars a new kind of orders.'

They knocked on the gate, the porter was ny,
 And loked out at an hol, as man that was sly.
 The porter hadde byholde hem a litel while,
 He loved wel Gamelyn, and was adrad of gyle,
 And asked hem withoute what was here wille.
 For al the grete company thanne spak but oon,
 'Undo the gate, porter, and lat us in goon.'
 Than seyde the porter, 'So brouke I my chyn,
 Ye schul sey your erand er ye comen in.'
 'Sey to Gamelyn and Adam, if here wille be,
 We wil speke with hem wordes two or thre.'
 'Felawe,' seyde the porter, 'stond there stille,
 And I wil wende to Gamelyn to witen his wille.'
 In went the porter to Gamelyn anoon,
 And seyde, 'Sir, I warne you her ben come your foon.
 The scherreves meyne ben atte gate,
 For to take you bothe, schul ye nat skape.'
 'Porter,' seyde Gamelyn, 'so moot I wel the!
 I wil allowe the thy wordes¹ whan I my tyme se;
 Go agayn to the gate, and dwel with hem a while,
 And thou schalt se right sone, porter, a gyle.
 Adam,' sayde Gamelyn, 'looke the to goon;
 We have foomen atte gate, and frendes never oon;
 It ben the schirrefes men, that hider ben i-come,
 They ben swore to-gidere that we schul be nome.'
 'Gamelyn,' seyde Adam, 'hye the right blyve,
 And if I faile the this day, evel mot I thryve!
 And we schul so welcome the scherreves men,
 That some of hem schul make here beddes in the den.'
 Atte posterne gate Gamelyn out went,
 And a good cart staf in his hand he hente;
 Adam hente sone another gret staf,
 For to helpe Gamelyn, and goode strokes gaf.
 Adam felde tweyne, and Gamelyn felde thre,
 The other setten feet on erthe, and bygonne fle.
 'What?' seyde Adam, 'so ever here I masse!
 I have a draught of good wyn, drynk er ye passe.'

¹ I will give you the benefit of, or repay you for, your words, when I see an opportunity.

‘Nay, by God!’ sayde they, ‘thy drynk is not good,
It wolde make mannes brayne to lien in his hood.’
Gamelyn stood stille, and loked him aboute,
And seih the scherreve come with a gret route.
‘Adam,’ sayde Gamelyn, ‘my reed is now this,
Abide we no lenger, lest we fare amys:
I rede that we to woode goon ar that we be founde,
Better is us ther loose than in town y-bounde.’
Adam took by the hond yonge Gamelyn;
And everich of hem tuo drank a draught of wyn,
And after took her coursers and wenten her way.
Tho fond the scherreve nest, but non ay.
The scherreve lighte adoun, and went into the halle,
And fond the lord y-fetered faste withalle.
The scherreve unfetered him sone, and that anon,
And sent after a leche to hele his rigge-boon.

Lete we now this fals knight lyen in his care,
And talke we of Gamelyn, and loke how he fare.
Gamelyn into the woode stalkede stille,
And Adam the spenser liked ful ylle;
Adam swor to Gamelyn, by seynt Richer,
‘Now I see it is mery to be a spencer,
That lever me were keyes for to bere,
Than walken in this wilde woode my clothes to tere.’
‘Adam,’ seyde Gamelyn, ‘dismaye the right nought;
Many good mannes child in care is i-brought.’
And as they stooode talkyng bothen in feere,
Adam herd talkyng of men, and ney him thought
thei were.

Tho Gamelyn under the woode loked aright,
Sevene score of yonge men he saugh wel adight;
Alle satte atte mete in compas aboute.
‘Adam,’ seyde Gamelyn, ‘now have we no doute,
After bale cometh boote, thurgh grace of God almight;
Me thynketh of mete and of drynk that I have a sight.’
Adam lokede tho under woode bowgh,
And whan he seyh mete he was glad ynough;
For he hopede to God for to have his deel,
And he was sore alonged after a good meel.

As he seyde that worde, the mayster outlawe
 Saugh Gamelyn and Adam under woode schawe.
 'Yonge men,' seyde the maister, 'by the goode roode,
 I am war of gestes, God send us non but goode;
 Yonder ben tuo yonge men, wonder wel adight,
 And paraventure ther ben mo, who so loket aright.
 Ariseth up, ye yonge men, and fetteth hem to me;
 It is good that we witen what men they bee.'
 Up ther sterten sevene fro the dyner,
 And metten with Gamelyn and Adam spenser.
 Whan they were neyh hem, than seyde that oon,
 'Yeldeth up, yonge men, your bowes and your floon.'
 Thanne seyde Gamelyn, that yong was of elde,
 'Moche sorwe mot he have that to you hem yelde!
 I curse non other, but right myselve,
 They ye fette to yow fyve, thanne ye be twelve.'
 Tho they herde by his word that might was in his arm,
 Ther was none of hem alle that wolde do him harm,
 But sayd unto Gamelyn, myldely and stille,
 'Com afore our maister, and sey to him thy wille.'
 'Yonge men,' sayde Gamelyn, 'by your lewte,
 What man is your maister that ye with be!'
 Alle they answerde withoute lesyng,
 'Oure maister is i-crowned of outlawes kyng.'
 'Adam,' seyde Gamelyn, 'go we in Cristes name;
 He may neyther mete nor drynk werne us for schame.
 If that he be heende, and come of gentil blood,
 He wol geve us mete and drynk, and doon us som good.'
 'By seynt Jame!' seyde Adam, 'what harm that I gete,
 I wil auntre to the dore that I hadde mete.'
 Gamelyn and Adam wente forth in feere,
 And they grette the maister that they founde there.
 Than seide the maister, kyng of outlawes,
 'What seeke ye, yonge men, under woode schawes?'
 Gamelyn answerde the kyng with his croune,
 'He moste needes walke in woode, that may not
 waike in towne.

Sire, we walk not heer noon harm for to do,
 But if we meete with a deer, to scheete therto,

As men that ben hungry, and mow no mete fynde,
 And ben harde bystad under woode lynde.
 Of Gamelynes wordes the maister hadde routhe,
 And seyde, 'Ye schal have ynough, have God my
 trouthe,'

He bad hem sitte ther adoun, for to take reste;
 And bad hem ete and drynke, and that of the beste.
 As they sete and eeten and dronke wel and fyn,
 Than seyde that oon to that other, 'This is Gamelyn.'
 Tho was the maister outlawe into counseil nome,
 And told how it was Gamelyn that thider was i-come.
 Anon as he herde how it was bifalle,
 He made him maister under him over hem alle.
 Within the thridde wyke him com tydyng,
 To the maister outlawe that tho was her kyng,
 That he schulde come hom, his pees was i-made;
 And of that goode tydyng he was tho ful glad.
 Tho seyde he to his yonge men, soth for to telle,
 'Me ben comen tydynges I may no lenger dwelle.'
 Tho was Gamelyn anon, withoute taryyng,
 Made maister outlawe, and crowned her kyng.

Tho was Gamelyn crowned kyng of outlawes,
 And walked a while under woode schawes.
 The fals knight his brother was scherreve and sire,
 And leet his brother endite for hate and for ire.
 Tho were his bonde-men sory and nothing glade,
 Whan Gamelyn her lord wolves heed¹ was cryed and
 made;

And sente out of his men wher they might him fynde,
 For to seke Gamelyn under woode lynde,
 To telle him tydynges how the wynd was went,
 And al his good reved, and his men schent.²

¹ This was the ancient Saxon formula of outlawry, and seems to have been literally equivalent to setting the man's head at the same estimate as a wolf's head. In the laws of Edward the Confessor, it is said of a person who has fled justice, 'Si vero postea repertus fuerit, et retineri possit, vivus regi reddatur, vel caput ejus, si se defenderit. Lupinum enim gerit caput, quod anglice *wulfes-heofod* dicitur. Et hæc est lex communis et generalis de omnibus utlagatis.'—W.

² On change of possession by the death or outlawry of the Lord of

Whan they had him founde, on knees they hem sette,
 And adoun with here hood, and here lord grette :
 'Sire, wraththe¹ you nought, for the goode roode,
 For we have brought you tydynges, but they be nat
 goode.

Now is thy brother scherreve, and hath the baillye,²
 And he hath endited the, and wolves-heed doth the
 crie.'

'Allas!' seyde Gamelyn, 'that ever I was so slak
 That I ne hadde broke his nekke, tho his rigge brak!
 Goth, greteth hem wel, myn housbondes and wyf,³
 I wol ben atte nexte schire, have God my lyf.'
 Gamelyn came wel redy to the nexte schire,
 And ther was his brother bothe lord and sire.
 Gamelyn com boldelych into the moot halle,
 And put adoun his hood among the lordes alle :
 'God save you alle, lordynges, that now here be !
 But broke-bak scherreve, evel mot thou the !
 Why hast thou do me that schame and vilonye,
 For to late endite me, and wolves-heed me crye ?
 Tho thought the fals knight for to ben awreke,
 And leet take Gamelyn, most he nomore speke ;
 Might ther be nomore grace, but Gamelyn atte last
 Was cast into prisoun and fetered ful fast.
 Gamelyn hath a brother that highte sir Ote,
 As good a knight and heende as mighte gon on foote.
 Anon ther yede a messenger to that goode knight,
 And tolde him altogidere how Gamelyn was dight.

the Manor, the serfs, or villains regardant, who went with the property of the soil, were liable to pay fines to his successor; and, in a case like the present, these fines would probably be oppressively exacted.

¹ A man of Gamelyn's violent temper might be expected to wreak his vengeance on the slave who brought him evil tidings. This is a feeling by no means peculiar to the middle ages.

² That is, 'has obtained the government of the bailiwick.' In former times, before the modern system of standing armies and municipal police was introduced, the high sheriff was the officer personally responsible for the peace of his bailiwick, which he maintained by calling out the *posse comitatus* to assist him.

³ This means, apparently, 'My husbandmen and their wives.'

Anon as sire Ote herde how Gamelyn was adight,
 He was wonder sory, was he nothing light,
 And leet saddle a steede, and the way he nam,
 And to his tweyne bretheren anon right he cam.
 'Sire,' seyde sire Ote to the scherreve tho,
 'We ben but thre bretheren, schul we never be mo,
 And thou hast y-prisoned the best of us alle;
 Swich another brother yvel mot him bifalle!
 'Sire Ote,' seide the fals knight, 'lat be thi curs;
 By God, for thy wordes he schal fare the wurs;
 To the kynges prisoun anon he is y-nome,
 And ther he schal abyde til the justice come.'
 'Parde!' seyde sir Ote, 'better it schal be,
 I bidde him to maympris, that thou graunt him me,
 Til the nexte sittying of delyveraunce,¹
 And thanne lat Gamelyn stande to his chaunce.'
 'Brother, in swich a forthward take him to the;
 And by thi fader soule, that the bygat and me,
 But if he be redy whan the justice sitte,
 Thou schalt bere the juggerment for al thi grete witte.'
 'I graunte wel,' seide sir Ote, 'that it so be.
 Let delyver him anon, and tak him to me.'
 Tho was Gamelyn delyvered to sire Ote his brother;
 And that night dwelleden that on with that other.
 On the morn seyde Gamelyn to sire Ote the heende,
 'Brother,' he seide, 'I moot for sothe from the wende,
 To loke how my yonge men leden here lyf,
 Whether they lyven in joie or elles in stryf.'
 'Be God!' seyde sire Ote, 'that is a cold reed,
 Now I see that al the cark schall fallen on myn heed;
 For whan the justice sitte, and thou be nought y-founde,
 I schal anon be take, and in thy stede i-bounde.'
 'Brother,' sayde Gamelyn, 'dismaye the nought,
 For by seint Jame in Gales, that many man hath
 If that God almighty hold my lyf and witt, [sought,
 I wil be ther redy whan the justice sitt.'

¹ I demand that he be granted to me on mainprize, or bail, till the assize for general gaol delivery.

Than seide sir Ote to Gamelyn, 'God schielde the fro
schame;
Com whan thou seest tyme, and bring us out of
blame.'

Litheth, and lestneth, and holdeth you stille,
And ye schul here how Gamelyn had al his wille.
Gamelyn wente agein under woode rys,
And fond there pleying yonge men of prys.
Tho was yonge Gamelyn glad and blithe ynough,
Whan he fond his mery men under woode bough.
Gamelyn and his men talked in feere,
And they hadde good game here maister to heere;
They tolden him of adventures that they hadde founde,
And Gamelyn hem tolde agein how he was fast
i-bounde.

Whil Gamelyn was outlawed, had he no cors;
There was no man that for him ferde the wors,
But abbotes and priours, monk and chanoun;¹
On hem left he nothing whan he might hem nom.
Whil Gamelyn and his men made merthes ryve,
The fals knight his brother, yvel mot he thryve!
For he was fast about bothe day and other,
For to hyre the quest,² to hangen his brother.
Gamelyn stood on a day, and as he biheeld
The woodes and the schawes in the wilde feeld,
He thought on his brother how he him beheet
That he wolde be redy whan the justice seet;
He thoughte wel that he wolde, withoute delay,
Come afore the justice to kepen his day,
And seide to his yonge men, 'Dighteth you yare,
For whan the justice sit, we moote be thare,
For I am under borwe til that I come,
And my brother for me to prisoun schal be nome.'
'By seint Jame!' seyde his yonge men, 'and thou
rede therto,
Ordeyne how it schal be, and it schal be do.'

¹ See *antz*, p. 255, note 1.

² To suborn the jury.

Whil Gamelyn was comyng ther the justice sat,
 The fals knight his brother, forgat he nat that,
 To huyre the men on his quest to hangen his brother;
 Though he hadde nought that oon he wolde have
 Tho cam Gamelyn fro under woode rys, [that other.
 And broughte with him his yonge men of prys.

‘I se wel,’ seyde Gamelyn, ‘the justice is sette;
 Go afor, Adam, and loke how it spette.’
 Adam went into the halle, and loked al aboute,
 He seyh there stonde lordes gret and stoute,
 And sir Ote his brother fetered wel fast:
 Tho went Adam out of halle, as he were aghast.
 Adam said to Gamelyn and to his felaws alle,
 ‘Sir Ote stant i-fetered in the moot halle.’
 ‘Yonge men,’ seide Gamelyn, ‘this ye heeren alle;
 Sire Ote stant i-fetered in the moot halle.
 If God gif us grace wel for to doo,
 He schal it abegge that broughte him thertoo.’
 Thanne sayde Adam, that lokkes hadde hore,
 ‘Cristes curs most he have that him bond so sore!
 And thou wilt, Gamelyn, do after my red,
 Ther is noon in the halle schal bere away his heed.’
 ‘Adam,’ seyde Gamelyn, ‘we wiln nought don so,
 We wil slee the giltyf, and lat the other go.
 I wil into the halle, and with the justice speke;
 On hem that ben gultyf I wil ben awreke.
 Lat non skape at the dore; take, yonge men, yeme;
 For I wil be justice this day domes to deme.
 God spede me this day at my newe werk!
 Adam, com on with me, for thou schalt be my clerk.’
 His men answereden him and bade him doon his best,
 ‘And if thou to us have neede, thou schalt fynde us
 prest;

We wiln stande with the, wil that we may dure,
 And but we werke manly, pay us non hure.’
 ‘Yonge men,’ seyde Gamelyn, ‘so mot I wel thei
 As trusty a maister ye schal fynde of me.’

Right thore the justice sat in the halle,
In wente Gamelyn amonges hem alle.

Gamelyn leet unfetere his brother out of beende.
Thanne seyde sir Ote, his brother that was heende,
'Thou haddest almost, Gamelyn, dwelled to longe,
For the quest is oute¹ on me, that I schulde honge.'
'Brother,' seyde Gamelyn, 'so God gif me good
rest!

This day they schuln ben hanged that ben on thy
quest;

And the justice bothe that is jugges man,
And the scherreve bothe, thurgh him it bigan.'

Than seyde Gamelyn to the justise,
'Now is thy power y-don, thou most nedes arise;
Thow hast geven domes that ben yvel dight,
I wil sitten in thy sete, and dresen hem aright.'

The justice sat stille, and roos nought anoon;

And Gamelyn clevede his cheeke boon;

Gamelyn took him in his arm, and no more spak,
But threw him over the barre, and his arm to-brak.

Durste non to Gamelyn seye but good,

For-fered of the company that withoute stood.

Gamelyn sette him down in the justices sete,

And sire Ote his brother by him, and Adam at his
feet.

Whan Gamelyn was i-set in the justices stede,

Herkneth of a bourde that Gamelyn dede.

He leet fetre the justice and his fals brother,

And dede hem come to the barre, that oon with that
other.

Tho Gamelyn hadde thus y-doon, had he no rest,

Til he had enquired who was on the quest

For to deme his brother, sir Ote, for to honge;

Er he wiste which they were it thoughte ful longe.

¹ The verdict is delivered.

Thus wan Gamelyn his lond and his leede,
 And wrak him of his enemys, and quyt hem here
 meede,
 And sire Ote his brother made him his heir,
 And siththen wedded Gamelyn a wyf bothe good and
 feyr;
 They lyveden togidere whil that Crist wolde,
 And sithen was Gamelyn graven under molde.
 And so schal we alle, may ther no man fle:
 God bryng us to the joye that ever schal be!

THE MAN OF LAWES PROLOGE.

O WRE Hoste sawh that the brighte sonne
 The arke of his artificial day hath i-ronne
 The fourthe part, of half an hour and more;
 And though he were nat depe expert in lore,
 He wist it was the eightetene day¹
 Of April, that is messanger to May;
 And sawe wel that the schade of every tree
 Was in the lengthe the same quantite
 That was the body erecte, that caused it;
 And therfore by the schadwe he took his wit,
 That Phebus, which that schoon so fair and bright,
 Degrees was five and fourty clombe on hight;
 And for that day, as in that latitude,
 It was ten of the klokke, he gan conclude;
 And sodeynly he plight his hors aboute.
 'Lordynges,' quod he, 'I warne you al the route,
 The fourthe party of this day is goon;
 Now, for the love of God and of seint Jon,
 Leseth no tyme, as ferforth² as ye may,
 Lordynges, the tyme passeth night and day,

¹ *Eightetene*. This is the reading in which the MSS. seem mostly to agree. The MS. Harl. reads *threttenthe*. Tyrwhitt has *eighte and twenty*.—W.

² The Harl. MS. reads, *forthe*. *Ferforth* in the text is taken from Tyrwhitt, and is probably correct, as agreeing better both with the sense and metre.

And stelith fro us, what pryvely slepyng,
 And what thurgh necligence in oure wakyng,
 As doth the streem, that torneth never agayn,
 Descendyng fro the mounteyn into playn.
 Wel can Senek and many philosopher
 Bywaylen time, more than gold in cofre.
 For losse of catel may recovered be,
 But losse of tyme schendeth us, quod he.
 It wil nat come agayn, withoute drede,
 Nomore than wol Malkyns maydenhede,¹
 Whan sche had lost it in hir wantownesse.
 Let us nat mowlen thus in ydelnesse.

‘Sir Man of Lawe’ quod he, ‘so have ye blisse
 Telle us a tale anon, as forward ys.
 Ye be submitted thurgh your fre assent
 To stonden in this cas at my juggement.
 Acquyteth yow, and holdeth youre byheste;
 Than have ye doon your devour atte leste.’

‘Host,’ quod he, ‘*De par Dieux jeo assente*,²
 To breke forward is nat myn entent.
 Byheste is dette, and I wol holde fayn
 Al my byhest, I can no better sayn.
 For such lawe as a man geveth another wight,
 He schuld himselve usen it by right.
 Thus wol oure text:³ but natheles certeyn
 I can right now non other tale seyn,

¹ A proverbial phrase, occurring, as Tyrwhitt observes, in *Piers Plowman* :—

‘Ye have no more merit
 Of masse ne of houres,
 Than Malkyn of hire maidenhood
 That no man desireth.’

² The Harl. MS. reads *Depardeux* I assent; that in the text is taken from Tyrwhitt. The lawyer is thus made characteristically to use the law terms in French, which was then the language of the courts, though a statute, passed 36 Edward III., enacted that all pleas should be pleaded in English. This was not, however, generally enforced, even in the time of Sir John Fortescue, a hundred years later.—HALLAM, *Lit. Mid. Ages*, vol. i. c. i. § 52.

³ The Man of Lawe is tinctured with the pedantry of his profession and thinks that no reason is good unless sanctioned by some authority from a law-book.

That¹ Chancer, thay he can but lewedly
 On metres and on rymyng craftely,
 Hath seyð hem in such Englisch as he can,
 Of olde tyme, as knoweth many man.
 And gif he have nought sayd hem, leeve brother,
 In o bok, he hath seyð hem in another.
 For he hath told of lovers up and doun,
 Moo than Ovide made of mencioun²
 In his Epistelles, that ben so olde.
 What schuld I tellen hem, syn they be tolde ?
 In youthe he made³ of Ceys and Alcioun,
 And siththe hath he spoke of everychon
 These noble wyfes, and these lovers eeke,
 Who so wole his large volume seeke,
 Cleped the seintes legende of Cupide;⁴
 Ther may he see the large woundes wyde
 Of Lucesse, and of Babiloun Tysbee;
 The sorwe of Dido for the fals Enee;
 The tree of Philles for hir Demephon;
 The pleynt of Dyane⁵ and of Ermyon,
 Of Adrian,⁶ and of Ysyphilee;
 The barreyn yle stondyng in the see;
 The dreynt Leandere for his fayre Erro;
 The teeres of Eley, and eek the woo

¹ Tyrwhitt reads *but* from one MS. The reading in the text is good English of the time, but the modern construction would require a negative.

² A transposition for *made mention of*.

³ *Made* means *wrote poetry*. *Maker* was a common word in the middle ages for a poet. Of the lovers here mentioned only seven are found in the *Saintes Legende of Cupide*, otherwise the *Legende of Gode Women*, in which are the stories of Cleopatra and Philomene, meaning Philomela, not mentioned here. They are all taken from Ovid's *Heroides sive Epistolæ*.

⁴ It appears that this was one name of the poem which is now known by the title of the *Legende of Gode Women*. This name is one example of the way in which Chaucer entered into the spirit of the heathen pantheism, as a real form of religion. He considers these persons, who suffered for love, to have been saints and martyrs for Cupid, just as Peter and Paul and Cyprian were martyrs for Christ.

⁵ Dejanira, pronounced (like Italian) *Deyanira*, and so written by Tyrwhitt.

⁶ Ariadne. The other misspellings are obvious.

Of Bryxseyde, and of Ledomia
 The cruelte of the queen Medea,
 The litel children hangyng by the hals,
 For thilke Jason, that was of love so fals.
 O Ypermystre, Penollope, and Alceste,
 Youre wyfhood he comendeth with the beste
 But certeynly no worde writeth he
 Of thilke wikked ensample of Canace,
 That loved hir owen brother synfully;
 On whiche corsed stories I seye fy;
 Or elles of Tyro Appolonëus,¹
 How that the cursed kyng Antechus
 Byreft his doughter of hir maydenhede,
 That is so horrible a tale for to reede,
 Whan he hir threw upon the pament.
 And therfore he of ful avysement
 Wold never wryte in non of his sermons
 Of such unkynde abhominaciouns;
 Ne I wol non reherse, if that I may.
 But of my tale how schal I do this day?
 Me were loth to be lykned douteles
 To Muses, that men clepen Pyerides.²
 (*Methamorphoseos* wot what I mene);
 But natheles I recche nat a bene,
 They I come after him with hawe-bake,³
 I speke in prose, and let him rymes make.⁴

¹ The romance of *Apollonius of Tyre* existed in Latin before A.D. 900. A Saxon translation (which has been edited by Thorpe) is preserved in the library of Corpus Christi, Cam. The story is found in the *Gesta Romanorum*, and in Gower's *Confessio Amantis*; was translated into barbarous Greek by the fugitives from Constantinople in the fifteenth century; was one of the earliest printed books; and forms the basis of the play of *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, ascribed to Shakespeare.—See WARTON.

² He rather means, I think, the daughters of Pierus, who contended with the Muses, and were changed into pies. Ovid., *Met.* v.—T.

³ This word has puzzled Tyrwhitt and all the commentators. It appears to be a form of 'hark back,' a term in hunting, by which the hounds are called back. [The explanation *hark back* cannot stand; the Mid. English for that would be *herke bak*, which cannot rhyme with *mak-è*. The expression in the text is correct, and merely means 'baked haws,' i.e. plain, homely fare. We have evidence that haws were eaten.—W. W. S.]

⁴ The lawyer says, 'I have no scruple in borrowing one of Chaucer's

And with that word, he with a sobre cheere
Bygan his tale, as ye schal after heere.

THE MAN OF LAWES TALE.

[MR. WRIGHT supposes this tale to have been derived from a French romance, and traces its several incidents to various mediæval stories, amongst which he enumerates the romances of *Emare*, in Ritson's collection; that of the *Chevalier au Cigne*, and the still older Saxon romance of *King Offa*, preserved in a Latin form by Matthew Paris; the *Roman de la Violette*; *Le Bone Florence of Rome*, also in Ritson; a chapter of *Vincent of Beauvais*; and the *Gesta Romanorum*, that inexhaustible treasure-house of fiction. Tyrwhitt says it is taken, with little variation, from Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, which was written, as its author states, in the sixteenth year of the reign of Richard II., 1392-3, and therefore before the probable date of *The Canterbury Tales*. Upon the lines in the prologue beginning, 'But certeynly no worde writeth he,' Tyrwhitt founded a conjecture that the friendship which had subsisted between the two poets was interrupted in their old age, which he thinks is confirmed by the fact that in the copies of the *Confessio Amantis* made subsequently to the accession of Henry IV., Gower omitted some verses in praise of Chaucer. Sir Harris Nicolas, to whom all admirers of the poet are deeply indebted for his complete demolition of the unfounded theories of his predecessors, states his opinion that Tyrwhitt's grounds for this supposition are 'very light;' and that 'he has answered his own suggestion; for he justly observes that Chaucer could not have meant to show disrespect to Gower in a piece in which, like *The Man of Lawes Tale*, almost every incident is borrowed from Gower;' and that 'the omission of the lines alluded to in the late copy of the *Con-*

tales entire, because my business, as a lawyer, is to talk in prose; his, as a poet, to make rhymes.'

fessio Amantis, may be explained by Chaucer being then dead.' Now the grounds of Tyrwhitt's hypothesis may be, and perhaps are, light; but certainly not for the reasons here mentioned. There is no necessity to suppose that Chaucer took his tale from Gower—on the contrary, it is much more likely, as Mr. Wright observes, that both poems might be traced to a common original in some popular romance; and the fact of Chaucer's being dead, instead of furnishing an explanation of the omission of the complimentary lines, suggests a reason why Gower should be desirous of retaining them as a record of his attachment to his deceased friend. On the whole, it appears that Tyrwhitt's conjecture is founded upon no positive and indisputable evidence; but neither has it yet been satisfactorily disproved.

Of Chaucer's heroic and comic styles we have already had examples in the three first tales; in this exquisitely touching picture of resignation, founded upon Christian faith and hope, he displays his powers of pathos. The pervading idea is that virtue is not to expect or seek its recompence in earthly happiness. Constance, that 'nobil creature,' is in fact too good to receive her reward in this world, which is therefore only the scene of her warfare and purification. The tone of mind produced by the perusal of the poem is one of awe and sober elevation, an effect like that of Longfellow's kindred story of *Evangeline*, which is marred, however, by his unfortunate choice of the (so-called) hexameter verse. The metre selected by Chaucer is, on the contrary, well adapted to a pathetic subject. It was apparently first used by him in English poetry, and was taken, no doubt, from the Italian *ottava rima*, which it resembles in cadence, but from which it differs in wanting the fifth line to rhyme with the first and third.]

O HATEFUL harm, condicioun of povert,
 With thurst, with cold, with longer so con-
 To asken help it schameth in thin hert, [foundyd,
 If thou non aske, with neede so art thou woundyd,
 That verray neede unwrappeth al thy wounde hyd;

Maugre thyn heed thou most for indigence
Or stele, or begge, or borwe thy dispence.

Thow blamest Crist, and seyst ful bitterly,
He mysdeparteth riches temporal;
And thyn neyhebour thou wytes synfully;
And seyst thou hast to litel, and he hath al.
Parfay, seystow, som tyme he rekne schal,
Whan that his tayl schal brennen in the gleede,
For he nought helpeth the needful in his neede.

Herkneth what is the sentens of the wyse,
Bet is to dye than have indigence;¹
Thy selve neyghebour wol the despyse,
If thou be pore, farwel thy reverence.
Yet of the wyse man tak this sentence,
Alle the dayes of pore men be wikke;
Be war therfore or thou come to that prikke.

If thou be pore, thy brother hateth the,
And alle thy frendes fleeth fro the, allas!
O riche marchaundz, ful of wele be ye,
O noble prudent folk as in this cas,
Youre bagges beth nat fuld with ambes aas,²
But with sys synk, that renneth on your chaunce;
At Crystemasse wel mery may ye daunce.

Ye seeke land and see for your wynnynge,
As wyse folk as ye knowe alle thastates
Of regnes, ye be fadres of tydynges,
Of tales, bothe of pees and of debates.³
I were right now of tales desolat,
Nere that a marchaunt, gon siththen many a yere,
Me taught a tale, which ye schal after heere.

In Surrie⁴ dwelled whilom a companye
Of chapmen riche, and therto sad and trewe,

¹ Proverbs xiv. 20.

² *Ambes aas* means *both ace* or *aces*. You are the fortunate ones of the earth; the dice are in your favour.

³ There is even still a propriety in this description of merchants. Rothschild and Lafitte might have been said to know and calculate upon the state of kingdoms; and stockjobbers are still the *fathers* of many tidings both of peace and war.

⁴ Syria.

That wyde where¹ sent her spycerye,
 Clothes of gold, and satyn riche of hewe.
 Her chaffar was so thrifty and so newe,
 That every wight had deynte to chaffare
 With hem, and eek to selle hem of here ware.

Now fel it, that the maystres of that sort
 Han schapen hem to Rome for to wende,
 Were it for chapmanhode or for disport,
 Non other message nolde they thider sende,
 But came hemself to Rome, this is the ende;
 And in such place as thought hem avauntage
 For here entent, they tooke her herburgage.

Sojourned have these marchauntz in the toun
 A certeyn tyme, as fel to here plesaunce.
 But so bifell, that the excellent renoun
 Of themperoures doughter dame Custaunce
 Reported was, with every circumstaunce,
 Unto these Surrienz marchauntz, in such wyse
 Fro day to day, as I schal you devyse.

This was the comyn voys of every man:
 ‘Oure emperour of Rome, God him see!
 A doughter hath, that, sith the world bygan,
 To rekne as wel hir goodnes as her bewte,
 Nas never such another as was sche.
 I prey to God hir save and susteene,
 And wolde sche were of al Europe the queene.

‘In hire is hye bewte, withoute pryde;
 Yowthe, withoute grefhed or foyle;
 To alle hire werkes vertu is hire gyde;
 Humblesse hath slayne in hir tyrrannye;
 Sche is myrour of alle curtesye,
 Hir herte is verrey chambre of holynesse,
 Hir hond mynistrer of fredom and almesse.’

And al this voys is soth, as God is trewe.
 But now to purpos let us turne agein: [newe,
 These marchantz have don fraught here schippes

¹ Widely, in every direction.

And whan they have this blisful made seyn,
 Home to Surrey be they went agein,
 And doon here needes, as they have don yore,
 And lyven in wele, I can you say no more.

Now fel it, that these marchauntz stooden in grace
 Of him that was the sowdan of Surrye.
 For whan they come fro eny straunge place,
 He wolde of his benigne curtesye
 Make hem good chere, and busily aspye
 Tydynges of sondry regnes, for to lere
 The wordes that they mighte seen and heere.

Among other thinges specially
 These marchauntz him told of dame Constaunce
 So gret noblesse, in earnest so ryally,
 That this sowdan hath caught so gret plesaunce
 To have hir figure in his remembraunce,
 That al his lust, and al his besy cure,
 Was for to love hir, whiles his lyf may dure.

Paraventure in thilke large booke,¹
 Which that is cleped the heven, i-write was
 With sterres, whan that he his burthe took,
 That he for love schulde have his deth, allas!
 For in the sterres, clerere than is glas,
 Is wryten, God woot, who so cowthe it rede,
 The deth of every man, withouten drede.

In sterres many a wynter therbyfore,
 Was write the deth of Ector and Achilles,
 Of Pompe, Julius, er they were i-bore;
 The stryf of Thebes, and of Ercules,
 Of Sampson, Turnus, and of Socrates
 The deth; but mennes wittes ben so dulle,
 That no wight can wel rede it at the fulle.

This sowdan for his pryve counseil sent,
 And schortly of this mater for to pace,
 He hath to hem declared his entent,

¹ Tyrwhitt quotes, as the original of these two stanzas, a passage from the *Magacosmus of Bernardus Sylvestris*, given in the margin of the MS. Cot. i.

And seyd hem certeyn, but he might have grace
To have Constance withinne a litel space,
He nas but deed, and charged hem in hyghe
To schapen for his lyf som remedye.

Dyverse men divers thinges seyde,¹
The argumentes casten up and down;
Many a subtyl resoun forth they leyden;
They spekyn of magike, and of abusioun;
But finally, as in conclusioun,
They can nought seen in that non avauntage,
Ne in non other wey, save in mariage.

Then sawgh they therein such difficulte
By wey of resoun, to speke it al playn,
Bycause that ther was such dyversite
Bitwen here bothe lawes, as they sayn,
They trowe that 'no cristen prince wold fayn
Wedden his child under our lawe swete,
That us was taught by Mahoun² oure prophete.

And he answerde: 'Rather than I lese
Constance, I wol be cristen doubteles;
I moot be heres, I may non other cheese;
I pray you haldeth your arguments in pees,
Saveth my lyf, and beth nat recheles.
Goth, geteth hire that hath my lyf in cure,
For in this wo I may no lenger dure.'

What needeth gretter dilatacioun?
I say, by tretys and ambassatrye,
And by the popes mediacioun,
And al the chirche, and al the chyvalrye,
That in destruccioun of mawmetrye,
And in encesse of Cristes lawe deere,
They ben acordid, as ye schal after heere,

¹ This is an example of the way in which the inflections of the verb were gradually disused. The *n* is dropped in the word *seyde*, while it is retained in *leyden*, two lines lower down; in speaking, both words were pronounced alike, as appears by the fact that they are made to rhyme together.

² Mahomet, sometimes written *Mahound*.

How that the soudan and his baronage,
 And alle his lieges schuld i-crystned be,
 And he schal have Constance in mariage,
 And certeyn gold, I not what quantite,
 And therfore founden they suffisant seurte.
 This same acord was sworn on every syde;
 Now, fair Constance, almighty God the guyde!

Now wolde som men wayten, as I gesse,
 That I schulde tellen al the purvyauce,
 That themperour of his gret noblesse
 Hath schapen for his doughter dame Constaunce.
 Wel may men knowe that so gret ordynaunce
 May no man telle in so litel a clause,
 As was arrayed for so high a cause.

Bisschops¹ ben schapen with hir for to wende,
 Lordes, ladyes, and knightes of renoun,
 And other folk ynowe, this is the ende.
 And notefied is thurghout the toun,
 That every wight with gret devocioun
 Schulde preye Crist, that he this mariage
 Receyve in gree, and spede this viage.

The day is come of hire departyng,
 (I say the woful day that than is come)
 That ther may be no lenger tarryyng,
 But forthe-ward they dresse hem alle and some.
 Constance, that with sorwe is overcome,
 Ful pale arist, and dresseth hir to wende.
 For wel sche saugh ther nas non other ende.

Allas! what wonder is it though sche wepte,
 That schal be sent to straunge nacioun,
 Fro freendes, that so tenderly hir kepte,
 And to be bounde undur subjeccioun
 Of oon sche knew nat his condicioun?

¹ So when Ethelbert married Bertha, daughter of the Christian King Charibert, she brought with her, to the court of her husband, a Gallican bishop named Lendhard, who was permitted to celebrate mass in the ancient British Church of St. Martin, near Canterbury.

Housbondes ben al goode, and han be yore;¹
That knowen wyfes, I dar say no more.

‘Fader,’ sche seid, ‘thy wrecched child Constaunce,
Thy yonge doughter fostred up so softe,
And ye, my mooder, my soverayn plesaunce
Over al thing, outaken Criste on lofte,²
Constaunce your child hir recomaundeth ofte
Unto your grace; for I schal into Surrye,
Ne schal I never see you more with ye.

‘Allas! unto the Barbre nacioun
I most anoon, sethens it is your wille:
But Crist, that starf for our redempcioun,
So geve me grace his hestes to fulfille,
I, wrecched womman, no fors they I spille!³
Wommen ben born to thraldam and penaunce,
And to ben under mannes governaunce.’

I trowe at Troye whan Pirrus brak the wal,
Or Yleon that brend, Thebes the citee,⁴
Ne at Rome for the harme thurgh Hanibal,
That Romaines have venquysshed tymes thre,
Nas herd such tender wepyng for pite,
As in the chambur was for hir partyng;
But forth sche moot, whether sche weep or syng.

O firste mevyng cruel firmament,
With thi diurnal swough that crowdest ay,
And hurlest al fro est to occident.
That naturelly wold hold another way;
Thyn crowdyng sette the heven in such array
At the bygynnyng of this fiers viage,
That cruel Martz hath slayn this marriage.

Infortunat ascendent tortuous,
Of which the lordes helples falle, alas!
Out of his angle into the derkest hous.

¹ Ironical.

² Except Christ on high.

³ No matter though I perish.

⁴ Or at Ilion that burned (or was burnt), or at the city of Thebes.
The line would be improved by reading—

‘Or Ileon brent, or Thebes the citee.’

O Marie Attezere,¹ as in this caas;
 O feble moone, unhappy been thi paas,
 Thou knettest the ther thou art nat receyved,
 Ther thou were wel fro thennes artow weyved.

Imprudent emperour of Rome, allas!
 Was ther no philosopher in al thy toun?
 Is no tyme bet than other in such caas?
 Of viage is ther noon eleccioun.
 Namly to folk of heigh condicioun,
 Nought whan a roote is of a birthe i-knowe?
 Allas! we ben to lewed, and eek to slowe.

To schippe is brought this woful faire mayde
 Solempnely, with every circumstaunce.
 'Now Jhesa Crist so be with you,' sche sayde.
 Ther nys nomor, but farwel, fair Custaunce;
 She peyneth hire to make good contienauce.
 And forth I lete hire sayle in this manere,
 And torne I wol agein to my matiere.

The moder of the sowdan, ful of vices,
 Aspyed hath hir sones playn entente,
 How he wol lete his olde sacrifices;³
 And right anoon sche for hir counseil sent,
 And they ben come, to knowe what sche ment;
 And whan assembled was this folk in fere,
 Sche sette hir down, and sayd as ye schal heere.

¹ Tyrwhitt, who reads 'O Mars, O Atyzar,' acknowledges himself at a loss to choose between the different readings of this passage. [The right reading is 'O Mars, O Atazir.' *O Atazir* means oh! evil influence! The word is Arabic, with Spanish spelling; see *atacir* in Dozy, *Glossaire des Mots Espagnols dérivés de l'Arabique*, p. 207.—W. W. S.]

² In the margin of the Lansdowne and Cotton MSS. is the following quotation from the *Liber Electionum* by Zael:—'Omnes sunt concordati quod electiones sint debiles, nisi in divitibus,' &c. Few would care to read the whole; but the meaning seems to be that the fortunes of people of high condition only are discoverable by the stars. An analogy may be observed in the superstition of the *Banshee*, or shrieking woman, believed by the Celts of Scotland and Ireland to foretel the death of persons of noble blood.

³ The Mahomedan religion does not admit of the idea of a sacrifice or atonement; but all false religions were confounded in the popular mind.

‘Lordes,’ quod sche, ‘ye knowen everichon,
 How that my sone in poynt is for to lete
 ‘The holy lawes of our Alkaroun,¹
 Geven by Goddes messangere Makamete ;
 But oon avow to grete God I hete,
 The lyf schuld rather out of my body stert,
 Or Makametes law go out of myn hert.

‘What schal us tyden of this newe lawe
 But thraldam to oure body and penaunce,
 And afterward in helle to be drawe,
 For we reneyed Mahound oure creaunce ?
 But, lordes, wol ye maken assuraunce,
 As I schal say, assentyng to my lore ?
 And I schal make us sauf for evermore.’

They swornen and assenten every man
 To lyf with hir and dye, and by hir stonde ;
 And everich in the beste wise he can
 To strengthen hir schal al his frendes fonde.
 And sche hath emperise take on honde,
 Which ye schul heere that I schal devyse,
 And to hem alle sche spak in this wise :

‘We schul first feyne ous cristendom to take ;²
 Cold watir schal nat greve us but a lite ;
 And I schal such a fest and revel make,
 That, as I trow, I schal the sowdan quyte.
 For though his wyf be cristned never so white,
 Sche schal have neede to waissche away the rede,
 They sche a font of watir with hir lede.’

O sowdones, root of iniquite
 Virago thou Semyram³ the secounde ;
 O serpent under feminite,

¹ The Koran was translated into Latin in the twelfth century ; and to the intercourse which at this period was kept up between the people of Europe and the Arabs, Mr. Hallam attributes the great, though secret, progress of scepticism, which may be traced in a continually increasing stream through the literature of the middle ages.—HALLAM. *Lit of the Mid. Ages*, vol. i. c. ii. 64.

² To receive baptism.

³ Alluding to Semiramis murdering her King.

Lyk to the serpent deep in helle i-bounde ;
 O feyned womman, alle that may confounde
 Vertu and innocence, thurgh thy malice,
 Is bred in the, as nest of every vice.

O Satan, envyous syn thilke day
 That thou were chased fro oure heritage,¹
 Wel knewest thou to wommen the olde way.
 Thou madest Eve to bryng us in servage,
 Thou wolt fordoon this cristen mariage.
 Thyn instrument so (weylaway the while !)
 Makestow of wommen whan thou wolt bygyle.

This sowdones, whom I thus blame and wary
 Let pryvely hir counseil gon his way ;
 What schuld I in this tale lenger tary ?
 Sche rideth to the sowdan on a day,
 And seyde him, that sche wold reney hir lay,
 And cristendam of prestes handes fonge,
 Repentyng hir sche hethen was so longe ;
 Bysechyng him to doon hir that honour,
 That sche most have the cristen men to feste ;
 'To plesen hem I will do my labour.'
 The sowdan seith, 'I wol do at your heste,'
 And knelyng, thanketh hir of that requeste ;
 So glad he was, he nyst nat what to seye.
 Sche kyst hir sone, and hom sche goth hir weye.

Arryved ben the cristen folke to londe
 In Surry, with a gret solempne route,
 And hastily this sowdan sent his sonde,
 First to his moder, and al the regne aboute,
 And seyde, his wyf was comen out of doute,
 And preyeth hir for to ride agein the queene,²
 The honour of his regne to susteene.

Gret was the prees, and riche was tharray
 Of Surriens and Romayns mette in feere.

¹ An allusion to Luke x. 18. 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.' Also, Rev. xii., and other passages; the sources of the mediæval legend which served as the foundation of *Paradise Lost*.

² To meet the Queen.

The mooder of the sowdan riche and gay
 Receyved hir with al so glad a checre,
 As eny mooder might hir doughter deere ;
 And to the nexte citee ther bysyde
 A softe paas solempnely thay ryde.

Nought trow I the triumphc of Julius,
 Of which that Lukan¹ maketh moche bost,
 Was ryaller, ne more curious,
 Than was thassemble of this blisful oost.
 But this scorpioun, this wikked goost,
 The sowdones, for al hir flateryng,
 Cast under this ful mortally to styng.

The sowdan comth himself sone after this
 So really, that wonder is to telle ;
 And welcometh hir with al joy and blys.
 And thus with mirth and joy I let hem dwelle.
 The fruyt of this matier is that I telle.
 Whan tyme com, men thought it for the best
 That revel stynt, and men goon to her rest.

The tyme com, the olde sowdonesse
 Ordeyned hath this fest of which I told ;
 And to the feste cristen folk hem dresse
 In general, bothe yong and old.
 Ther men may fest and realte byholde,
 And deyntes mo than I can of devyse,
 But al to deere they bought it ar they ryse.

²O sodeyn wo ! that ever art successour
 To worldly blis, spreynd is with bitternesse
 The ende of oure joye, of oure worldly labour ;
 Wo occupieth the fyn of oure gladnesse.
 Herken this counseil for thyn sikernesse ;
 Upon thyn glade dayes have in thi mynde
 The unwar woo that cometh ay bihynde.

For schortly for to tellen at o word,
 The sowdan and the cristen everichone

¹ Lucan, author of the *Pharsalia*.

² This stanza is taken from different passages in Scripture Prov. xiv. 13 ; Eccles. xi. 8.

Ben al to-hewe and stiked atte bord,
 But it were dame Constaunce allone.
 This olde sowdones, this cursed crone,
 Hath with hir frendes doon this cursed dede,
 For sche hirsolf wold al the contre lede.

Ne ther was Surrien noon that was converted,
 That of the counseil of the sowdon woot,
 That he nas al to-hewe or he asterted ;
 And Constaunce have they take anon foot-hoot,¹
 And in a schippe, stereles, God it woot,
 They have hir set, and bad hir lerne to sayle
 Out of Surry agein-ward to Ytaile.

A certein tresour that sche thider ladde,
 And, soth to sayn, vitaille gret plente,
 They have hir geven, and clothes eek sche hadde,
 And forth sche sayleth in the salte see.

O my Constaunce, ful of benignite,
 O emperoures yonge doughter deere,
 He that is Lord of fortun be thi steere !

Sche blesseth hir,² and with ful pitous voys
 Unto the croys of Crist than seyde sche :

‘ O cler, O welful auter, holy croys,
 Red of the lambes blood, ful of pite,
 That wissh the world fro old iniquite,
 Me fro the feend and fro his clowes keepe,
 That day that I schal drenchen in the deepe.

¹ With all expedition. Tyrwhitt says that *haut-le-pied* has the same meaning, and, therefore, supposed that *foot-hot* is quasi *foot-haut*. But from the subjoined note in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, it would rather seem to be derived from following an animal of the chase so quickly that the scent of its footsteps is *hot* upon the ground. ‘The pursuit of border marauders was followed by the injured party and his friends with blood-hounds and bugle-horn, and was called the *hot-trod*.’ The phrase *hot-foot*, signifying the following up any pursuit instantly or quickly, is common among the peasantry of Ireland.

² To bless oneself is to make the sign of the cross on the forehead and breast, as an act of faith in the atonement of Christ. It is mentioned by Tertullian, *de Resur. carnis*, by Cyprian, and most of the early Christian writers, as a usual custom in their times before taking anything in hand.

‘ Viotorious tre, proteccioun of trewe,
 That oonly were worthy for to bere
 The Kyng of Heven, with his woundes newe,
 Thé white Lamb, that hurt was with a spere ;
 Flemer of scendcs, out of him and here
 On which thy lymes feithfully extenden,
 Me kepe, and gif me might my lyf to menden.’

Yeres and dayes flette this creature
 Thurghout the see of Grece, into the strayte
 Of Marrok,¹ as it was hir adventure.
 O many a sory mele may sche bayte,
 After hir deth ful ofte may sehe wayte,
 Or that the wilde wawe wol hir dryve
 Unto the place ther as sehe schal arryve.

Men mighten aske, why sehe was nought slayn ?
 Ek at the fest who might hir body save ?
 And I answer to that demaunde agayn,
 Who saved Daniel in thorrible cave,
 That every wight, sauf he, mayster or knave,
 Was with the lioun frete, or he asterte ?
 No wight but God, that he bar in his herte.

God lust to schewe his wondurful miracle
 In hir, for we schuld seen his mighty werkes ;
 Crist, which that is to every harm triacle,
 By certeyn menes ofte, as knowen clerkes,
 Doth thing for certeyn ende, that ful derk is
 To mannes witt, that for our ignoraunce
 Ne can nought knowe his prudent purvyaunce.

Now sith sche was nat at the fest i-slawe,
 Who kepte hir fro drenching in the see ?
 Who kepte Jonas in the fisches mawe,
 Til he was spouted up at Ninive ?
 Wel may men knowe, it was no wight but He
 That kept the pepul Ebrayk fro her drenchyng,
 With drye feet thurghout the see passyng.

¹ Straits of Gibraltar.

Who badde foure spiritz of tempest,
 That power han to noyen land and see,
 Bothe north and south, and also west and est,
 Anoyen neyther londe, see, ne tree?¹
 Sothly the comaunder of that was He
 That fro the tempest ay this womman kepte,
 As wel when sche awok as when sche slepte.

Wher might this womman mete and drinke have!
 Thre yer and more, how lasteth hir vitaille?
 Who fedde the Egipcien Marie² in the cave,
 Or in desert? no wight but Crist *saunz faile*.
 Fyf thousand folk, it was a gret mervaile
 With loves fyf and fissesches tuo to feede;
 God sent his foysoun at her grete neede.

Sche dryveth forth into oure ocean
 Thurghout oure wilde see, til atte last
 Under an holte, that nempnen I ne can,
 Fer in Northumberland, the wawe hir cast,
 And in the sand the schip styked so fast,
 That thiennes wold it nought in al a tyde;
 The wille of Crist was that sche schold abyde.

The constabil of the castel down is fare
 To se this wrak, and al the schip he sought,
 And fond this very womman ful of care;
 He fand also the tresour that sche brought,
 In hir langage mercy sche bisought,
 The lif out of hir body for to twynne,
 Hir to delyver of woo that sche was inne.

A maner Latyn corrupt³ was hir speche,
 But algates therby sche was understonde.
 The constabil, whan him lust no lenger seche,

¹ The passages of Scripture here alluded to are Daniel vi., Jonah ii. 11, Exod. xiv., Rev. viii. 2, 3, Matt. xiv.

² St. Mary the Egyptian was a prostitute; but, being converted, she fled to the desert, where she lived in solitude for forty-seven years, during which time she was miraculously sustained.—*Legenda Aurea*.

³ So Boccaccio, in his letter to *la Fiammetta*, quoted by Tyrwhitt, in

This woful womman broughte he to londe.
 Sche kneleth doun, and thanketh Goddes sonde
 But what sche was, sche wolde no man seye
 For foul ne faire, though sche scholde deye.

Sche was, sche seyde, so mased in the see,
 That sche forgat hir mynde, by hire trowthe.
 The constable had of hir so gret pitee,
 And eek his wyf, they wepeden for routhe ;
 Sche was so diligent withouten slouth
 To serve and plesse ever in that place,
 That alle hir loven that loken on hir face.

The constable and dame Hermegylde¹ his wyf,
 To telle you playne, payenes bothe were ;²
 But Hermegylde loved Constance as hir lyf ;
 And Constance hath so long herberwed there
 In orisoun, with many a bitter teere,
 Til Jhesu hath converted thurgh his grace
 Dame Hermegylde, the constables³ of the place.

In al the lond no cristen men durst route ;
 Al cristen men ben fled from that contre
 Thurgh payens, that conquered al aboute
 The places of the north by land and see.
 To Wales fled the cristianite
 Of olde Britouns, dwellyng in this yle ;
 Ther was hir refut for the mene while.

But yit nere cristen Britouns so exiled,
 That ther nere some in here pryvite
 Honoured Christ, and hethen folk bygiled ;⁴

his introduction, says that he had translated the story of the *Theseïda* in *Latino volgare*, meaning Italian, which was the vernacular tongue of Constance.

¹ Mr. Wright says that the Saxon is *Eormengild*, which was the name of one of the daughters of Earconbehrt, King of Kent.

² Tyrwhitt gives (from other MSS.) instead of this line—

‘ Were payenes, and that contree every wher.’

The Harl. MS. has *in peynes* for *payenes*.—W.

³ Constableness means the constable’s wife, like the French *châtelaine*, the *châtelain’s* wife.

⁴ This is corroborative of Mr. Ellis’s opinion, expressed in the introduction to his *Met. Romances*, sec. ii — ‘ Upon the whole, though it is

And neigh the castel such ther dwellid thre.
 That oon of hem was blynd, and might nat se,
 But if it were with eyen of his mynde,
 With which men seen after that they ben blynde.

Bright was the sonne, as in someres day,
 For which the constable and his wif also
 And Constaunce had take the righte way
 Toward the see, a forlong wey or two,
 To pleyen, and to romen to and fro ;
 And in that walk this blynde man they mette,
 Croked and olde, with eyen fast y-schette.

‘ In name of Crist,’ cryed this old Britoun,
 ‘ Dame Hermegyld, gif me my sight ageyn !’¹
 This lady wax affrayed of the soun,
 Lest that hir houseband, schortly to sayn,
 Wold hir for Jhesu Cristes love have slayn,
 Til Constaunce made hir bold, and bad hir werche
 The wil of Crist, as doughter of holy chirche.

The constable wax abaissed of that sight,
 And sayde, ‘ What amounteth al this fare ?’
 Constaunce answered, ‘ Sir, it is Cristes might,
 That helpeth folk out of the feendes snare.’
 And so ferforth sche gan hir lay² declare,

certain that the leaders and princes of Britain defended their power with equal valour and obstinacy, it would be very rash to conclude that the whole body of their subjects preferred exile or extermination to a timid and disloyal acquiescence in the government of a foreign invader: or that this invader disdained to derive from the labours of his new subjects either the necessities of life or those luxuries and useful arts which they had learned from the Romans. In short, all analogy seems to concur with the best evidence, in leading us to believe that the Saxons and Britons of the lowlands were gradually incorporated, like the Franks and Gauls, though, perhaps, in very different proportions, so as to form one people.’

¹ Why the blind man should infer that Dame Hermegyld had the power of working miracles, because she had been converted to Christianity, is not clear. Perhaps he is supposed to be seized with a supernatural impulse, sent expressly in order that the constable might be converted by the miracle.

² Her law, *scil.*, the Gospel, called the new law, as the Mosaic was called the old.

That sche the constable, er that it was eve
Converted, and on Crist made him bileve.

This constable was not lord of the place
Of which I speke, ther he Constance fond,
But kept it strongly many a wynter space
Under Alla,¹ kyng of Northumberlond,
That was ful wys, and worthy of his hond,
Agein the Scottes, as men may wel heere.
But tourne agein I wil to my mateere.

Satan, that ever us wayteth to begile,
Sawe of Constaunce al hir perfeccioun,
And cast anoon how he might quyt hir while;
And made a yong knight, that dwelt in the toun,
Love hir so hoot of foul affeccioun,
That verrayly him thought he schulde spille,
But he of hire oones had his wille.

He wowith hir, but it avayleth nought,
Sche wolde do no synne by no weye;
And for despyt, he compassed in his thought
To maken hir a schamful deth to deye.
He wayteth whan the constable was aweye,
And pryvyly upon a nyght he crepte
In Hermyngyldes chambre whil sche slepte.

Wery, for-waked in here orisoun,
Slepeth Constaunce, and Hermyngyld also.
This knight, thurgh Satanas temptacioun,
Al softly is to the bed y-go,
And kutte the throte of Hermegild a-two,
And leyd the bloody knyf by dame Constaunce,
And went his way, ther God geve him meschaunce.

Sone after comth this constable hom agayn,
And eek Alla, that kyng was of that lond,
And say his wyf dispitously i-slayn,

¹ This is the king whose name gave occasion to one of Pope Gregory the Great's well-known string of puns. When told that the name of the king who reigned in Northumberland was Ella or Alla, he said he trusted that not Alla, but Alleluia, would soon be sung in his dominions.

For which ful oft he wept and wrong his hond;
 And in the bed the bloody knyf he fond
 By dame Custaunce: alas! what might she say?
 For verray woo hir witt was al away.

To king Alla was told al this meschaunce,
 And eek the tyme, and wher, and in what wyse
 That in a schip was founden this Constaunce,
 As here bifore ye have herd me devyse.
 The kinges hert of pite gan agrise,
 Whan he saugh so benigne a creature
 Falle in disese and in mysaventure.

For as the lomb toward his deth is brought,
 So stant this innocent bifore the kyng.
 This false knight, that hath this tresoun wrought,
 Bereth hir an hand that sche hath don this thing;
 But nevertheles ther was gret murmuryng
 Among the poeple, and seyn they can not gesse
 That sche had doon so gret a wikkednesse.

For they han seyen hir so vertuous,
 And lovyng Hermegyd right as hir lyf;
 Of this bar witnesse everich in that hous,
 Save he that Hermegyd slowgh with his knyf.
 This gentil kyng hath caught a gret motyf¹
 Of his witnesse, and thought he wold enquire
 Depper in this cas, a trouthe to lere.

Allas! Constaunce, thou ne has no champioun,
 Ne fighte canstow nat, so welaway!
 But He that for oure redempcioun
 Bonde Sathan, that² yit lith ther he iay,
 So be thy stronge champioun this day;
 For but Crist upon the miracle kythe,
 Withouten gilt thou schalt be slayn as swithe.

Sche set hir down on knees, and than sche sayde
 'Immortal God, that savedest Susanne
 Fro false blame; and thou mercyful mayde,

Suspicion.

And in Harl. MS., apparently a clerical error.

Mary I mene, doughter of seint Anne,
 Bifore whos child aungeles syng Osanne;
 If I be gultles of this felonye,
 My socour be, for elles schal I dye!

Have ye not seye som tyme a pale face,
 Among a prees, of him that hath be lad
 Toward his deth, wher him geyneth no grace,
 And such a colour in his face hath had,
 Men mighte knowe his face was so bystad,
 Among alle the faces in that route;
 So stant Constance, and loketh hire about.

O queenes lyvyng in prosperite,
 Duchesses, and ye ladies everychon,
 Haveth som reuthe on her adversite;
 An emperoures doughter stond allon;
 Sche nath no wight to whom to make hir moon:
 O blod ryal, that stondest in this drede,
 Ferre be thy frendes at thy grete neede!

This Alla kyng hath such compassioun,
 As gentil hert is fulfild of pite,
 That from his eyen ran the water down.
 'Now hastily do fech a book,' quod he;
 'And if this knight wil swere how that sche
 This womman slowgh, yet wol we us avyse.
 Whom that we wille schal be oure justise.'

A Britoun¹ book, i-write with Evaungiles,
 Was fette, and on this book he swor anoon
 Sche gultif was; and in the mene whiles
 An hond him smot upon the nekke boon,
 That down he fel anon right as a stoon;
 And bothe his yen brast out of his face
 In sight of every body in that place.

A vois was herd, in general audience,
 And seid, 'Thou hast disclaundred gulteles
 The doughter of holy chirche in hire presence;

¹ See ante, p. 286, note 4.

Thus hastow doon, and yit I holde my pees"
 Of this mervaile agast was al the prees,
 As mased folk they stooden everychon
 For drede of wreche, save Custaunce allon.

Gret was the drede and eek the repentaunce
 Of hem that hadden wrong suspeccioun
 Upon the sely innocent Custaunce;
 And for this miracle, in conclusioun,
 And by Custaunces mediacioun,
 The kyng, and many other in the place,
 Converted was, thanked be Cristes grace!

This false knight was slayn for his untrouthe
 By juggement of Alla hastyly;
 And yit Custaunce hath of his deth gret routhe.
 And after this Jhesus of his mercy
 Made Alla wedde ful solempnely
 This holy mayde, that is bright and schene,
 And thus hath Crist i-maad Constance a queene.

But who was woful, if I schal not lye,
 Of this weddyng but Domegild and no mo,
 The kynges mooder, ful of tyrannye?
 Hir thought hir cursed herte brast a-two;
 Sche wolde nat hir sone had i-do so;
 Hir thought despyte, that he schulde take
 So straunge a creature unto his make.

Me lust not of the caf ne of the stree
 Make so long a tale, as of the corn.
 What schuld I telle of the realte
 Of this mariage, or which cours goth biforn,
 Who bloweth in a trompe or in an horn?
 The fruyt² of every tale is for to seye;
 They ete and drynk, and daunce and synge and pleye.
 They gon to bed, as it was skile and right;
 For though that wyfes ben ful holy thinges,
 They moste take in pacience a-night

¹ [The reading '*helde* my pees' might have been expected, but the MSS. do not warrant it.—W. W. S.]

² It is the fruit or kernel of a tale that ought to be told; a rule which

Such maner necessities as ben plesynges
 To folk that han i-wedded hem with rynges,
 And halvendel her holynesse ley aside
 As for the tyme, it may non other betyde.

On hire he gat a knave child anoon,
 And to a bisschope, and to his constable eeke,
 He took his wyf to kepe, whan he is goon
 To Scotlond-ward, his foomen for to seeke.
 Now faire Custaunce, that is so humble and meeke,
 So long is goon with childe til that stille
 Sche held hir chambre, abidyng Goddes wille.

The tyme is come, a knave childe sche bere;
 Mauricius atte funstone¹ men him calle.
 This constabil doth come forth a messenger,
 And wrot to his kyng that cleped was Alle,
 How that this blisful tydyng is bifalle,
 And other thinges spedful for to seye.
 He taketh the lettre, and forth he goth his weye.

This messenger, to doon his avauntage,
 Unto the kynges moder he goth ful swithe,
 And salueth hire fair in his langage.
 'Madame,' quod he, 'ye may be glad and blithe,
 And thanke God an hundred thousand sithe;
 My lady queen hath child, withouten doute
 To joye and blis of al the reame aboute.'

'Lo heer the lettres sealed of this thing,
 That I mot bere with al the hast I may;
 If ye wole ought unto youre sone the kyng,
 I am youre servaunt bothe night and day.'
 Doungyld answerde, 'As now this tyme, nay;
 But here al nyght I wol thou take thy rest,
 To morwen I wil say the what me lest.'

Chaucer, unlike his contemporaries, who are intolerably tedious, has followed in *The Canterbury Tales*, though not in all his works.

¹ At the font-stone, at his baptism. The Harleian MS., by a mistake of the scribe, reads *Maurius* for *Mauricius*.

This messenger drank sadly ale and wyn,
 And stolen were his lettres pryvely
 Out of his box, whil he sleep as a swyn;
 And countrefeet they were subtilly;
 Another sche him wroot ful synfully,
 Unto the kyng direct of this matiere
 Fro his constable, as ye schul after heere.

The lettre spak, the queen delyvered was
 Of so orryble and feendly creature,
 That in the castel noon so hardy was
 That eny while dorste therin endure;
 The mooder was an elf¹ by aventure
 Bycome by charmes or by sorcerie,
 And every man hatith hir companye.

Wo was this kyng whan he this letter had sein,
 But to no wight he told his sorwes sore,
 But of his owen hand he wrot agayn:
 'Welcome the sond of Crist² for everemore
 To me, that am now lerned in this lore;
 Lord, welcome be thy lust and thy pleasaunce!
 My lust I putte al in thyn ordinaunce.

'Kepeth this child, al be it foul or fair,
 And eek my wyf, unto myn hom comyng;
 Crist whan him lust may sende me an hair
 More agreable than this to my likyng.'
 This lettre he seleth, pryvyly wepyng,

¹ In the introduction to the ballad of *Tamlane*, in the *Border Minstrelsy*, is an interesting quotation from Einar Gudmund, a learned Icelandic, very much to the present purpose:—'I am firmly of opinion,' he says, 'that these beings (the elves) are creatures of God, consisting, like human beings, of a body and rational soul; that they are of different sexes, and capable of producing children, and subject to all human affections.' . . . He proceeds to state that the females of this race are capable of procreating with mankind, and gives an account of one who bore a child to an inhabitant of Iceland, for whom she claimed the privilege of baptism; depositing the infant for that purpose at the gate of the churchyard, together with a goblet of gold, as an offering.
 —*Historia Hrolfi Krakæ, a Torfæo.*

² Welcome what Christ sends.

Which to the messenger he took ful sone,
And forth he goth, ther nys no more to done.

O messenger, fulfild of dronkenesse,¹
Strong is thy breth, thy lymes faltren ay,
And thou bywreyest alle sykernesse;
Thy mynde is lorn, thou janglest as a jay;
Thy face is torned al in a newe array;
Ther drunkenesse regneth in eny route,
Ther is no counseil hid, withouten doute.

O Domegyld, I have non Englisch digne
Unto thy malice and thy tyrannye;
And therfor to the feend I the resigne,
Let him endyten of thi treccherie.
Fy, mannyssch, fy!—o nay, by God, I lye;
Fy, feendly spirit, for I dar wel telle,
Though thou here walke, thy spirit is in helle.

This messanger comth fro the kyng agayn,
And at the kinges modres court he light,
And sche was of this messenger ful fayn,
And pleseth him in al that ever sche might.
He drank, and wel his gurdel underpight;
He slepeth, and he fareth in his gyse
Al nyght, unto the sonne gan arise.

Eft were his lettres stolen everichon,
And countrefeted lettres in this wise:
‘The kyng comaundeth his constable anon,
Up peyne of hangyng and of heigh justise,
That he ne schulde suffre in no maner wyse
Constaunce in his regne for to abyde
Thre dayes, and a quarter of a tyde;

But in the same schip as he hir fond,
Hire and hir yonge sone, and al hire gere,

¹ Tyrwhitt gives in his notes from the margin of the MS. C. the following, from whence this stanza is taken:—‘*Quid turpius ebrioso, cui foetor in ore, tremor in corpore, qui promit stulta, prodit occulta; cui mens alienatur, facies transformatur? Nullum enim latet secretum ubi regnat ebrietas*’

He schulde putte, and crowde¹ fro the londe,
 And charge hire that sche never eft come there.'
 O my Constaunce, wel may thy goost have fere,
 And slepyng in thy drem ben in penaunce,
 Whan Domegyld cast al this ordynaunce.

This messenger a-morwe, whan he awook,
 Unto the castel held the nexte way;
 And to the constable he the lettre took,
 And whan that he the pitous lettre say,
 Ful ofte he seyde allas and welaway;
 'Lord Crist,' quod he, 'how may this world endure?
 So ful of synne is many a creature!

O mighty God, if that it be thy wille,
 Seth thou art rightful jugge, how may this be
 That thou wolt suffre innocentz to spille.
 And wikked folk regne in prosperite?
 O good Constance, allas! so wo is me,
 That I moot be thy tormentour, or deye
 On schamful deth, ther is non other weye.'

Wepen bothe yong and olde in al that place,
 Whan that the kyng this corsed lettre sent;
 And Constance with a dedly pale face
 The fourthe² day toward hir schip sche went.
 But nevertheles sche taketh in good entent
 The wil of Christ, and knelyng on the grounde
 Sche sayde, 'Lord, ay welcome be thy sonde!

He that me kepte fro the false blame,
 Whil I was on the lond amonges you,
 He can me kepe from harm and eek fro schame
 In the salt see, although I se nat how;
 As strong as ever he was, he is right now,
 In him trust I, and in his mooder deere,
 That is to me my sayl and eek my steere.'

¹ To push. It is still usual in Norfolk and Suffolk to speak of *crowding* a wheelbarrow.

² The Harl. MS. reads *fayre*. The reading in the text is from Tyrwhitt.

Hir litel child lay wepyng in hir arm,
 And knelyng pitously to him sche savde:
 'Pees, litle sone, I wol do the noon narm.'
 With that hir kerchef of hir hed sche brayde,
 And over his litel eyghen sche it layde,
 And in hir arm sche lullith it wel faste,
 And unto heven hir eyghen up sche caste.

'Moder,' quod sche, 'and mayde bright, Marie,
 Soth is, that thurgh wommannes eggement
 Mankynde was lorn and dampned ay to dye,
 For which thy child was on a cros to-rent;
 Thyn blisful eyghen sawh al this torment;¹
 Then nys ther noon comparisoun bitwene
 Thy wo, and any woo may man sustene.

'Thow saugh thy child i-slaw byfor thyn yen.
 And yit now lyveth my litel child, parfay;
 Now, lady bright, to whom alle woful cryen,
 Thou glory of wommanhod, thou faire may,
 Thou heven of refute, brighte sterre of day,
 Rewe on my child, that of thyn gentilnesse
 Rewest on every synful in destresse.

'O litel child, alas! what is thi gilt,
 That never wroughtest synne as yet, parde!
 Why wil thyn harde fader han the spilt?
 O mercy, deere constable,' seyde sche,
 'And let my litel child here dwelle with the;
 And if thou darst not saven him for blame,²
 So kys him oones in his fadres name.'

¹ The griefs of the blessed Virgin afforded to the poets of the early Church a favourite theme for appeals to the feelings, as in the well-known hymn (*Septem Dolorum B. V. Mariæ*), attributed to Innocent III., which is not unlike the passage in the text:—

'Pro peccatis suæ gentis
 Vidit Jesum in tormentis,
 Et flagellis subditum.
 Vidit suum dulcem natum
 Moriundo desolatum
 Dum emisit spiritum.'

² For fear of blame.

Therwith sche loketh bak-ward to the lond,
 And seyde, 'Farwel, housbond rewtheles !'
 And up sche rist, and walketh down the stronde
 Toward the schip, hir folweth al the prees;
 And ever sche preyeth hir child to hold his pees,
 And took hir leve, and with an holy entent
 Sche blesseth¹ hire, and to the schip sche went.

Vytailled was the schip, it is no drede,
 Abundauntly for hire a ful longe space;
 And other necessities that schulde nede
 Sche had ynowgh, leryed be Cristez grace;
 For wynd and water almighty God purchase,²
 And bryng hir hom, I can no bettre say,
 But in the see sche dryveth forth hir way.

Alla the kyng cometh hom soon after this
 Unto the castel, of the which I tolde,
 And asketh wher his wyf and his child ys.
 The constable gan aboute his herte colde,
 And playnly ai the maner he him tolde
 As ye han herd, I can telle it no better,
 And schewed the kynges seal and his letter;

And seyde, 'Lord, as ye comaunded me
 Up payne of deth, so have I do certayn.'
 This messenger tormented³ was, til he
 Moste biknowe and telle it plat and playn,
 Fro nyght to nyght in what place he had layn;
 And thus by witt and subtil enquiryng
 Ymaged was by wham this gan to spryng.

The hand was knowen that the lettre wroot,
 And al the venym of this cursed dede;
 But in what wyse, certeynly I noot.
 Theeffect is this, that Alla, out of drede,⁴
 His moder slough, as men may pleynly reede,

¹ See *ante*, p. 283, note 2.

² This means, May Almighty God take the wind and water into his especial possession or governance.

³ Examined by torture to make him discover his guilt.

⁴ This is an idiomatic expression of usual occurrence. There is no fear but that Ella slew his mother,—*i. e.*, *you may be sure* he did.

For that sche traytour was to hir ligeaunce.
Thus endeth olde Domegild with meschaunce.

The sorwe that this Alla night and day
Maketh for his wyf and for his child also,
Ther is no tonge that it telle may.
But now I wol unto Custaunce go,
That fleeteth in the see in peyne and wo
Fyve yeer and more, as liked Cristes sonde,
Er that hir schip approched unto londe.

Under an hethen castel atte last,
Of which the name in my text nought I fynde,
Constaunce and eek hir child the see upcast.
Almighty God, that saveth al mankynde,
Have on Constaunce and on hir child som mynde!
That fallen is in hethen hond eftsone,
In poynt to spille, as I schal telle you soone.

Down fro the castel cometh many a wight,
To gawren on this schip, and on Constaunce;
But schortly fro the castel on a night,
The lordes styward, God give him meschaunce!
A thief that had reneyed oure creaunce,
Com into schip alone, and seyde he scholde
Hir lemman be, whethir sche wold or nolde.

Wo was this wrecched womman tho bigoon,¹
Hire childe crieth and sche pytously;
But blisful Mary hilp hir right anoon,
For with hir stroglyng² wel and mightily
The thief fel over-boord al sodeinly,
And in the see he drenched for vengeaunce,
And thus hath Crist unwemmed kept Constaunce
O foule luste, O luxurie, lo thin ende!³
Nought oonly that thou feyntest mannes mynde,
But verrayly thou wolt his body schende.

¹ This wretched woman was woe begone, far gone in woe. [Woe-begone' means 'surrounded with woe.' A.-S. *begán* 'to surround.'—W. W. S.]

² Harl. MS. reads *strengthe*.

³ In the margin of the MS. C. i. is the following:—'O extrema libidinis turpitudine, quæ non solum mentem effeminat, set etiam corpus enervat: semper secuntur dolor et pœnitentia.'

The ende of thyn werk, or of thy lustes blynde,
Is compleynyng; how many may men fynde,
That nought for werk som tyme, but for thentent
To doon this synne, ben eyther slayn or schent!

How may this weyke womman han the strengthe
Hir to defende agcin this renegat?

O Goliath, unmesurable of lengthe,
How mighte David make the so mate?
So yong, and of armure so desolate,
How dorst he loke upon thyn dredful face?
Wel may men seyn, it nas but Goddes grace.

Who gaf Judith corage or hardynesse
To slen him Olefernes in his tent,
And to delyveren out of wrecchednes
The peple of God? I say in this entent,
That right as God spiryte and vigor sent
To hem, and saved hem out of meschaunce,
So sent he might and vigor to Constaunce.

Forth goth hir schip thurghout the narwe mouth
Of Jubalter and Septe,¹ dryvyng alway,
Som tyme west, and some tyme north and south,
And som tyme est, ful many a very day;
Til Cristes mooder, blessed be sche ay!
Hath schapen thurgh hir endeles goodnesse
To make an ende of hir hevynesse.

Now let us stynt of Constaunce but a throwe,
And speke we of the Romainy emperour,
That out of Surrye hath by lettres knowe
The slaughter of cristen folk, and deshounour
Doon to his doughter by a fals traytour,
I mene the cursed wikked sowdenesse,
That at the fest leet slee bothe more and lesse.

For which this emperour hath sent anoon
His senatours, with real ordynaunce,
And other lordes, God wot, many oon,

¹ Jubalter, of course, means Gibraltar. Ceuta, on the opposite coast of Africa, was formerly called *Septa*.

On Surriens to take high vengeance.
They brenne, sleen, and bringen hem to meschaunce
Ful many a day ; but schortly this is thende,
Hom-ward to Rome they schapen hem to wende.

This senatour repayreth with victorie
To Rome-ward, saylyng ful really,
And mette the schip dryvyng, as seth the story,
In which Constance sitteth ful pitously.
Nothing ne knew he what sehe was ne why
Sche was in such aray, sche nolde seye
Of hire astaat, although sche scholde deye.

He bryngeth hir to Rome, and to his wyf
He gaf hir, and hir yonge sone also ;
And with the senatour lad sche hir lyf.
Thus can our lady bryngen out of woo
Woful Constance and many another moo ;
And longe tyme dwelled sche in that place,
In holy werkes, as ever was hir grace.

The senatoures wif hir aunte was,
But for al that sehe knew hir never more :
I wol no lenger taryen in this cas,
But to kyng Alla, which I spak of yore,
That for his wyf wepeth and siketh sore,
I wol retorne, and lete I wol Constance
Under the senatoures governaunce.

Kyng Alla, which that had his mooder slayn,
Upon a day fel in such repentaunce,
That, if I schortly telle schal and playn,
To Rome¹ he cometh to receyve his penaunce,
And putte him in the popes ordynaunce
In heigh and lowe, and Jhesu Crist bysought,
Forgef his wikked werkes that he wrought,
The fame anon thurgh Rome town is born,

¹ There are many examples of Saxon kings relinquishing their dignities, and retiring to Rome, or ending their days in monastic seclusion. Among others, Coelwulf, King of Northumberland, to whom Bede dedicated his history, abdicated the throne about the year 738, and retired to Holy Island, where he died.

How Alla kyng schal come in pilgrymage,
 By herberjourz that wenten him biforn,
 For which the senatour, as was usage,
 Rood him agein,¹ and many of his lynage,
 As wel to schewen his magnificence,
 As to doon eny kyng a reverence.

Gret cheere doth this noble senatour
 To kyng Alla, and he to him also;
 Everich of hem doth other gret honour,
 And so bifel, that in a day or two
 This senatour is to kyng Alla go
 To fest, and schortly, if I schal not lye,
 Constances sone went in his companye.

Som men wold seyn at request of Custaunce
 This senatour hath lad this child to feste;
 I may not telle every circumstaunce,
 Be as be may, ther was he atte leste;
 But soth it is, right at his modres heste,
 Byforn hem alle, duryng the metes space,
 The child stood loking in the kynges face.

This Alla kyng hath of this child gret wonder,
 And to the senatour he seyde anon,
 'Whos is that faire child that stondeþ yonder?'
 'I not,' quod he, 'by God and by seynt Jon!
 A moder he hath, but fader hath he non,
 That I of woot:' and schortly in a stounde
 He told Alla how that this child was founde.

'But God woot,' quod this senatour also,
 'So vertuous a lyver in my lyf
 Ne saugh I never, such as sche, nomo
 Of worldly womman, mayden, or of wyf;
 I dar wel say sche hadde lever a knyf
 Thurghout hir brest, than ben a womman wikke,
 Ther is no man can bryng hir to that prikke.'²

¹ Rode to meet him.

² To that point, i. e., can blame her in that respect.

Now was this child as lik unto Custaunce
As possible is a creature to be.

This Alla hath the face in remembraunce
Of dame Custaunce, and thereon mused he,
If that the childes mooder were ought¹ sche
That is his wyf; and pryvely he hight,
And sped him fro the table that he might.

‘Parfay!’ thought he, ‘fantom is in myn heed;
I ought to deme, of rightful juggement,
That in the salte see my wyf is deed.’

And after-ward he made this argument:
‘What woot I, wher Crist hath hider sent
My wyf by see, as wel as he hir sent
To my contré, fro thennes that sche went?’

And after noon home with the senatour
Goth Alla, for to see this wonder chaunce.
This senatour doth Alla gret honour,
And hastely he sent after Custaunce.
But trusteth wel, hir luste nat to daunce,
Whan that sche wiste wherfor was that sonde,
Unnethes on hir feet sche mighte stonde.

Whan Alla saugh his wyf, fayre he hir grette,
And wepte, that it was rewthe to se;
For at the firste look he on hir sette
He knew wel verrelly that it was sche.
And for sorwe, as domb sche stant as tre;
So was hire herte schett² in hir distresse,
Whan sche remembred his unkyndenesse.

Twies sche swowned in his owen sight;
He wept and him excuseth pitously;
‘Now God,’ quod he, ‘and alle his halwes bright
So wisly on my soule have mercy,
That of youre harm as gulteles am I
As is Maurice my sone, so lyk youre face,
Elles the feend me fecche out of this place.’

¹ If the child's mother were by *any chance* she, &c.

² A beautiful phrase, expressive of the painful inability to speak or weep in violent grief, particularly if caused by unkindness.

Long was the sobbyng and the bitter peyne,
 Or that here woful herte mighte cesse;
 Gret was the pite for to here hem pleyne,
 Thurgh whiche playntz gan here wo encesse.
 I pray you alle my labour to relesse,
 I may not telle al here woo unto morwe,
 I am so wery for to speke of the sorwe.

But fynally, whan that the soth is wist,
 That Alla gilteles was of hir woo,
 I trowe an hundred tymes they ben kist,
 And such a blys is ther bitwix hem tuo,
 That, save the joye that lasteth everemo,
 Ther is noon lyk, that eny creature
 Hath seyn or schal, whil that the world may dure.

Tho prayde sche hir housbond meekely
 In the relees of hir pytous pyne,
 That he wold preye hir fader specially,
 That of his majeste he wold enclyne
 To vouchesauf som tyme with him to dyne.
 Sche preyeth him eek, he schulde by no weye
 Unto hir fader no word of hir seye.

Som men wold seye,¹ that hir child Maurice
 Doth his message unto the emperour;
 But, as I gesse, Alla was nat so nyce,²
 To him that is so soverayn of honour,
 As he that is of Cristes folk the flour,
 Sent eny child; but it is best to deeme
 He went himsilf, and so it may wel seme.

This emperour hath graunted gentilly
 To come to dyner, as he him bysought;
 And wel rede I, he loked besily
 Upon the child, and on his doughter thought.
 Alla goth to his in, and as him ought
 Arrayed for this fest in every wyse,
 As ferforth as his connyng may suffice.

¹ Tyrwhitt supposes that this refers to Gower's version of the story; but it alludes, more probably, to some romance which was the common original of both.

² *Nyce* is here used in the sense of *niais*, foolish.

The morwe cam, and Alla gan him dresse,
 And eek his wyf, the emperour for to meete;
 And forth they ryde in joye and in gladnesse,
 And whan sche saugh hir fader in the streete,
 Sche light adoun and falleth him to fecte.
 'Fader,' quod sche, 'your yonge child Constance
 Is now ful clene out of your remembraunce.

'I am your doughter Custaunce,' quod sche,
 'That whilom ye have sent unto Surryc;
 It am I, fader, that in the salte see
 Was put alloon, and dampned for to dye.
 Now, goode fader, mercy I you crye,
 Send me no more unto noon hethenesse,
 But thanke my lord her of his kyndenesse.'

Who can the pytous joye telle al
 Bitwix hem thre, sith they be thus i-mette?
 But of my tale make an ende I schal;
 The day goth fast, I wol no lenger lette.
 This glade folk to dyner they ben sette;
 In joye and blys at mete I let hem dwelle,
 A thousand fold wel more than I can telle.

This child Maurice was siththen emperour
 I-maad by the pope, and lyved cristenly,
 To Cristes chirche dede he gret honour.
 But I let al his story passen by,
 Of Custaunce is my tale specially;
 In olde Romain gestes men may fynd
 Maurices lyf, I bere it nought in mynde.

This kyng Alla whan he his tyme say,
 With his Constance, his holy wyf so swete.
 To Engelond they com the righte way.
 Wher as they lyve in joye and in quyetee.
 But litel whil it last, I you biheete,
 Joy of this world for tyme wol not abyde,
 Fro day to night it chaungeth as the tyde.¹

¹ In margin of MS. C. i., 'A mane usque ad vesperam mutabitur tempus; tenent tympanum et gaudent ad sonum organi,' &c.

Who lyved ever in such delyt a day,¹
 That him ne meved eyther his conscience,
 Or ire, or talent, or som maner affray,
 Envy, or pride, or passioun, or offence?
 I ne say but for this ende this sentence,
 That litel whil in joye or in plesaunce
 Lasteth the blis of Alla with Custaunce.

For deth, that takth of heigh and low his rent,
 Whan passed was a yeere, as I gesse,
 Out of this worlde kyng Alla he hent.
 For whom Custauns hath ful gret hevynesse.
 Now let us pray that God his soule blesse!
 And dame Custaunce, fynally to say,
 Toward the toun of Rome goth hir way.

To Rome is come this nobil creature,
 And fynt hir freendes ther bothe hool and sound;
 Now is sche skaped al hir aventure.
 And whanne sche her fader had i-founde,
 Doun on hir knees falleth sche to grounde,
 Wepying for tendirnes in herte blithe
 Sche heried God an hundred thousand sithe.

In vertu and in holy almes-dede
 They lyven alle, and never asondre wende;
 Til deth departe hem, this lyf they lede.
 And far now wel, my tale is at an ende.
 Now Jhesu Crist, that of his might may sende
 Joy after wo, governe us in his grace,
 And keep ous alle that ben in this place.²

¹ In margin of MS. C. i., 'Quis unquam unam diem totam in sua dilectione duxit jocundam? Quem in aliquâ parte diei reatus conscientie, vel impetus iræ, vel motus concupiscentie non turbavit,' &c.

² In some of the MSS. *The Marchaundes Tale* follows that of *The Man of Lawe*. The Harl. MS. erroneously places the *Prologue to the Shipman's Tale* before *The Wyf of Bathes Prologue*; to which latter there are the following four introductory lines in the Lansd. MS.:—

'Than schortly ansewarde the wife of Bathe,
 And swore a wonder grete hathe.
 'Be Goddes bones, I will tel next,
 I will not glose, but saye the text.
 Experiment, though none auctorite,' &c.

THE PROLOGE OF THE WYF OF BATHE.¹

EXPERIENS, though noon aucterite
 Were in this world, it were ynough for me
 To speke of wo that is in mariage;
 For, lordyngs, syns I twelf yer was of age,
 I thank it God that is eterne on lyve,
 Housbondes atte chirch dore I have had fyve,²
 For I so ofte might have weddid be,
 And alle were worthy men in here degre.
 But me was taught, nought longe tyme goon is,
 That synnes Crist went never but onys
 To weddyng, in the Cane of Galile,
 That by the same ensampul taught he me
 That I ne weddid schulde be but ones.
 Lo, herken such a scharp word for the nones!
 Biside a welle Jhesus, God and man,
 Spak in reproof of the Samaritan:
 'Thou hast y-had fyve housbondes,' quod he;
 'And that ilk-man, which that now hath the,
 Is nought thin housbond;' thus he sayd certayn;
 What that he ment therby, I can not sayn.
 But that I axe, why the fyfte man
 Was nought housbond to the Samaritan?
 How many might sche have in mariage?
 Yit herd I never tellen in myn age

¹ It appears that the *Wyf of Bathe's Prologe* was a kind of composition often recited by the minstrels or *contours*. Erasmus, in his *Ecclesiastes*, speaking of such preachers as imitated the tone of beggars or mountebanks, says, 'Apud Anglos,' &c. 'Among the English is a kind of men like those called in Italy *circulatores*, who intrude themselves into the feasts of persons of rank, or into wine-shops, and re-eite some discourse which they have learned by heart, such as *that death is supreme over all*, or *a praise of matrimony*.' But though Chaucer has adopted a subject and mode of composition which were probably already popular, his treatment of it, for wit and humour, ease and knowledge of human nature, is to be equalled only by the delineations of Shakespeare.

² See *ante*, p. 97, note 1.

Uppon this noumbre diffinicioun.
 Men may divine and glosen up and down;
 But wel I wot, withouten eny lye,
 God bad us for to wax and multiplie;
 That gentil tixt can I wel understonde.
 Ek wel I wot, he sayd, myn housebonde
 Schuld lete fader and moder, and folwe nie;
 But of no noumber mencion made he,
 Of bygamy¹ or of octogamy¹;
 Why schuld men speken of that vilonye?
 Lo hier the wise kyng daun Salomon,
 I trow he hadde wifes mo than oon,
 As wold God it were leful unto me
 To be refreissed half so oft as he!
 Which gift of God had he for alle his wyvys!
 No man hath such, that in the world on lyve is.
 God wot, this nobil king, as to my wit,
 The firste night had many a mery fit
 With ech of hem, so wel was him on lyve.
 I-blessid be God that I have weddid fyve!²
 Welcome the sixte whan that ever he schal!
 For sothe I nyl not kepe me chast in al;
 Whan myn housbond is fro the world i-gon,
 Som cristne man schal wedde me anoon,
 For than thapostil³ saith that I am fre
 To wedde, a goddis haf, wher so it be.
 He saith, that to be weddid is no synne;
 Bet is to be weddid than to brynne.⁴

¹ Bigamy, according to the canonists, consisted (not only in marrying two wives at a time, but) in marrying two spinsters successively, or a widow at all, and was supposed to argue passions so unrestrained as to incapacitate the bigamist for ever from receiving holy orders, in accordance with 1 Tim. iii. 2, as they understood it.

² The second Camb. MS. collated by Mr. Wright, several MSS. quoted by Tyrwhitt, and the printed editions, after this verse, read:—

‘Of whiche I have pyked out the beste,
 Bothe of here nether purs and of here cheste.’

³ Rom. vii. 3.

⁴ 1 Cor. vii. 9.

What recchith me what folk sayn viloyne
 Of schrewith Lameth, and of his bigamy¹?
 I wot wel Abram was an holy man,
 And Jacob eek, as ferforth as I can,
 And ech of hem had wyves mo than tuo,
 And many another holy man also.
 Whan sawe ye in eay maner age
 That highe God defendid² mariage
 By expres word? I pray you tellith me;
 Or wher commaunded he virginite?
 I wot as wel as ye, it is no drede,
 Thapostil, whan he spekth of maydenhede,
 He sayd, that precept therof had he noon;³
 Men may counseil a womman to be oon,
 But counselyng nys no comaundement;
 He put it in our owne juggement.
 For hadde God comaundid maydenhede,
 Than had he dampnyd weddyng with the dede;
 And certes, if ther were no seed i-sowe,
 Virginite whereon schuld it growe?
 Poul ne dorst not comaunde atte lest
 A thing, of which his maister gaf non hest.
 The dart⁴ is set upon virginite,
 Cach who so may, who rennith best let se.
 But this word is not taken of every wight,
 But ther as God list give it of his might.
 I wot wel that thapostil was a mayde,
 But natheles, though that he wrot or sayde,

¹ Gen. iv. There runs through the whole of this doctrine about bigamy a confusion between marrying twice and having two wives at once. All that is said in Scripture about bigamy in the latter sense, is applied to it in the former.

² Like the French *defendre*, to forbid.

³ 1 Cor. vii. 6.

A dart or spear was a usual prize for running, as in Lydgate—

‘And oft it happeneth he that best ron
 Doth not the spere like his desert possede.’

The meaning of the text is:—A great reward is indeed promised to virginity; it is one of the *counsels of perfection*; but it is not commanded all have not a vocation for it. The allusion is to Matt. xix., and

1 Cor. vii.

He wolde that every wight were such as he,
 Al nys but counseil unto virginite.
 And for to ben a wyf he gaf me leve,
 Of indulgence, so nys it to reprove
 To wedde me, if that my make deye,
 Withoute excepcioun of bigamye;
 Al were it good no womman for to touche,
 (He mente in his bed or in his couche)
 For peril is bothe fuyr and tow to assemble;
 Ye knowe what this ensample wold resemble
 This is al and som, he holdith virginite
 More parfit than weddyng in frelte;
 (Frelte clepe I, but if that he and sche
 Woid leden al ther lif in chastite).
 I graunt it wel, I have noon envye,
 Though maidenhede preferre¹ bygamye;
 It liketh hem to be clene in body and gost;
 Of myn estate I nyl make no bost.
 For wel ye wot, a lord in his household
 He nath not every vessel ful of gold;²
 Som ben of tre, and don her lord servise
 God clepth folk to him in sondry wise,
 And every hath of God a propre gifte,
 Som this, som that, as him likith to schifte.
 Virginite is gret perfeccioun,³
 And continens eek with gret devocioun;
 But Christ, that of perfeccioun is welle,
 Bad nought every wight schuld go and selle
 Al that he had, and give it to the pore,
 And in such wise folwe him and his lore.⁴
 He spak to hem that wolde lyve parfytly,
 And, lordyngs, by your leve, that am not I;
 I wol bystowe the flour of myn age
 In the actes and in the fruytes of mariage.
 Tel me also, to what conclusioun

¹ *Prefer* seems to be a neuter verb, signifying *be better than*.

² 2 Tim ii. 20.

³ Matt. xix. 21.

⁴ Harl. MS. reads *fore*, which is probably a mere clerical error. The reading in the text is from Tyrwhitt.

Were membres maad of generacioun,
 And of so parfit wise¹ a wight y-wrought?
 Trustith right wel, thay werenought maad for nought
 Glose who so wol, and saye bothe up and down,
 That they were made for purgacioun,
 Oure bothe uryñ, and thinges smale,
 Were eek to knowe a femel fro a male;
 And for non other cause:—say ye no?
 Thexperiens wot wel it is not so.
 So that these clerkes ben not with me wrothe,
 I say this, that thay makid ben for bothe,
 This is to say, for office and for ease
 Of engendrure, ther we God nought displease.
 Why schuld men elles in her bokes sette,
 That man schal yelde to his wif his dette;
 Now wherwith schuld he make his payement,
 If he ne used his sely instrument?
 Than were thay maad upon a creature
 To purge uryñ, and eek for engendrure.
 But I say not that every wight is holde,
 That hath such harneys as I to you tolde,
 To gon and usen hem in engendrure;
 Than schuld men take of chastite no cure.
 Crist was a mayde, and schapen as a man,
 And many a seynt, sin that the world bygan,
 Yet lyved thay ever in parfyt chastite.
 I nyl envye no virginite.
 Let hem be bred of pured whete seed,
 And let us wyves eten barly breed.
 And yet with barly bred, men telle can,
 Oure Lord Jhesu refreisschid many a man.
 In such astat as God hath cleped ous
 I wil persever, I am not precious;
 In wyfhode I wil use myñ instrument
 Als frely as my maker hath me it sent.
 If I be daungerous, God give me sorwe,
 Myñ housbond schal han it at eve and morwe.

¹ The Harl. MS. reads, *And in what wise*. Some MSS. read *and why*, instead of *a wight*.—W.

Whan that him list com forth and pay his dette.
 An housbond wol I have, I wol not lette,
 Which schal be bothe my dettour and my thral,
 And have his tribulacioun withal
 Upon his fleissch, whil that I am his wyf.
 I have the power duryng al my lif
 Upon his propre body, and not he;
 Right thus thapostil¹ told it unto me.
 And bad oure housbondes for to love us wel;
 Al this sentence me likith every del.'

Up start the pardonere, and that anon;
 'Now, dame,' quod he, 'by God and by seint Jon,
 Ye ben a noble prechour in this caas.
 I was aboute to wedde a wif, allaas!
 What? schal I buy it on my fleisch so deere?
 Yit had I lever wedde no wyf to yere!'
 'Abyd,' quod sche, 'my tale is not bygonne.
 Nay, thou schalt drinke of another tonne
 Er that I go, schal saveere wors than ale.
 And whan that I have told the forth my tale
 Of tribulacioun in mariage,
 Of which I am expert in al myn age,
 This is to say, myself hath ben the whippe,
 Than might thou chese whethir thou wilt sippe
 Of thilke tonne, that I schal abroche.
 Be war of it, er thou to neigh approche.
 For I schal telle ensamples mo than ten:
 Who so that nyl be war by other men
 By him schal other men corrected be.
 The same wordes writes Ptholome,²

¹ Ephes. v. 25. It is difficult to reconcile the account which our historians give of the ignorance of Scripture prevailing in the middle ages, with the fact that almost all the writings of those times which have come down to us are filled with allusions to the sacred writings, upon the Hebraisms of which, indeed, their barbarous Latin is founded, just as the peculiar phraseology of the Puritans is derived from the English translation of the Bible.

² In the margin of MS. c. i., is the following quotation:—'Qui per alios non corrigitur, alii per ipsum corrigentur.' But I cannot find any such passage in the *Almageste*.—T.

Rede in his Almagest, and tak it there.'
 'Dame, I wold pray you, if that youre wille were,
 Sayde this pardoner, 'as ye bigan,
 Tel forth youre tale, and sparith for no man,
 Teeche us yonge men of your practike.'
 'Gladly,' quod sche, 'syns it may yow like.
 But that I pray to al this companye,
 If that I speke after my fantasie,
 As taketh nought agreef of that I say,
 For myn entente is nought but to play.

'Now, sires, now wol I telle forth my tale.
 As ever mote I drinke wyn or ale,
 I schal say soth of housbondes that I hadde,
 As thre of hem were goode, and tuo were badde.
 Tuo of hem were goode, riche, and olde;
 Unnethes mighte thay the statute holde,
 In which that thay were bounden unto me;
 Ye wot wel what I mene of this pardé!
 As help me God, I laugh whan that I thinke,
 How pitously on night I made hem swynke,
 But, by my fay! I told of it no stoor;
 Thay had me give her lond and her tresor,
 Me nedith not no lenger doon diligence
 To wynne her love or doon hem reverence.
 Thay loved me so wel, by God above!
 That I tolde no deynte of her love.
 A wys womman wol bysi hir ever in oon
 To gete hir love, there sche hath noon.
 But synnes I had hem holly in myn hond,
 And synnes thay had me geven al her lond,
 What schuld I take keep hem for to please.
 But it were for my profyt, or myn ease?
 I sette hem so on werke, by my fay!
 That many a night thay songen weylaway.
 The bacoun was nought fet for hem, I trowe,
 That som men fecche in Essex at Donmowe.¹

¹ Lord Fitzwalter, in the reign of Henry III., ordered that whatever married couple did not quarrel or repent of their marriage within

I governed hem so wel after my lawe,
 That ech of hem ful blisful was and fawe
 To bringe me gaye thinges fro the faire.
 Thay were ful glad whan I spak to hem faire;
 For, God it woot, I chidde hem spitously.
 Now herkeneth how I bar me proprely.
 Ye wise wyves, that can understonde,
 Thus scholde ye speke, and bere hem wrong on
 For half so boldly can ther no man [honde;
 Swere and lye as a womman can.¹
 (I say not by wyves that ben wise,
 But if it be whan thay ben mysavise.)
 I wis a wif, if that sche can hir good,
 Schal beren him on hond the cow is wood,²
 And take witnes on hir oughne mayde
 Of hire assent; but herkenith how I sayde.
 See, olde caynard, is this thin array?³
 Why is my neghebores wif so gay?

a year and a day, should go to his priory of Dunmow, in Essex, and receive a flitch of bacon, on swearing to the truth, kneeling on two stones in the churchyard. The flitch has accordingly been claimed from time to time, the last occasion being at a meeting of the Dunmow Agricultural Society in January, 1838, as recorded in the *Chelmsford Chronicle* of that date. See also BLOUNT'S *Jocular Tenures*, edit. 1784, p. 296. A similar custom prevailed at Whichenover.—PLOT'S *Hist. of Staffordshire*. Tyrwhitt says it also existed in Bretagne, and quotes the following:—
 'A l'abbaye Sainct Melaine, pres Rennes, y a plus de six cens ans sont, un costé de lard encore tout frais et non corrompu, et neantmoins voué et ordonné aux premiers qui par an et jour ensemble mariez ont vescu sans debat, grondement, et sans s'en repentir.'—*Contes d'Eutrap*, tom. ii. p. 161. [It has been claimed more recently, in 1851, 1855, and 1876.—W. W. S.]

¹ This is taken from the *Roman de la Rose*:—

'Car plus hardiment que nulz homme,
 Certainement jurent et mentent.'

² Shall make them believe falsely that the cow is wood, which may signify either that the cow is *mad* or *made of wood*; which of the two is the preferable interpretation it will be safest not to determine till we can discover the old story to which this phrase seems to be a proverbial allusion.—T. [Wood is 'mad;' else we should have *wooden*.—W. W. S.]

³ Tyrwhitt says, 'In the following speech, it would be endless to point out all Chaucer's imitations. The beginning is from the fragment of Theophrastus, quoted by St. Jerome c. *Jovin.*, and by John of Salisbury, *Polycrat.*, lib. viii. c. xi.—See also *Roman de la Rose*.

Sche is honoured over al ther sche goth ;
 I sitte at hom, I have no thrifty cloth.
 What dostow at my neighebores hous?
 Is sche so fair? what, artow amorous?
 What rounc ye with hir maydenes? *benedicite*,
 Sir olde lecchour, let thi japes be.
 And if I have a gossib, or a frend
 Withouten gilt, thou chidest as a fend,
 If that I walk or play unto his hous.
 Thou comest hom as dronken as a mous.¹
 And prechist on thy bench, with evcl precf,
 Thou saist to me, it is a gret meschief
 To wedde a pover womman, for costage ;
 And if that sche be riche and of parage,
 Thanne saist thou, that it is a tormentrie
 To suffre hir pride and hir malencolie.
 And if that sche be fair, thou verray knave,
 Thou saist that every holour wol hir have ;
 Sche may no while in chastite abyde,
 That is assayled thus on eche syde.
 Thou saist that som folk desire us for riches,
 Som for our schap, and som for our fairnes,
 And some, for that sche can synge and daunce,
 And some for gentillesse or daliaunce,
 Som for hir handes and hir armes smale :
 Thus goth al to the devel by thi tale.
 Thou saist, men may nought kepe a castel wal,
 It may so be biseged over al.
 And if sche be foul, thanne thou saist, that sche
 Coveitith every man that sche may se ;
 For, as a spaynel, sche wol on him lepe,
 Til that sche fynde som man hire to chepe.

¹ In a note on this expression, Mr. Wright quotes a letter from a monk of Preston, in which the writer says that his brother monks of that house 'drynk an bowll after collacyon tell ten or xii. of the clock, and come to mattens as *dronck as mys*.'—'Letters relating to the suppression of the monasteries ;' Camd. Society's publications.

Ne noon so gray a goos goth in the lake,
 As sayest thou, wol be withouten make.¹
 And saist, it is an hard thing for to wolde
 Thing, that no man wol, his willes, holde.²
 Thus seistow, lorel, whan thou gost to bedde,
 And that no wys man nedith for to wedde,
 Ne no man that entendith unto hevene.
 With wilde thunder dynt and fuyry levene
 Mote thi wicked necke be to-broke!
 Thou saist, that droppying hous, and eek smoke,
 And chydying wyves maken men to fle
 Out of here oughne hous; a, *benedicite*,
 What eylyth such an old man for to chyde?
 Thou seist, we wyves woln oure vices hide,
 Til we ben weddid, and than we wil hem schewe.
 Wel may that be a proverbe of a schrewe.
 Thou saist, that assen, oxen, and houndes,
 Thay ben assayed at divers stoundes,
 Basyns, lavours eek, er men hem bye,
 Spones, stooles, and al such housbondrie,
 Also pottes, clothes, and array;
 But folk of wyves maken non assay,
 Til thay ben weddid, olde dotard schrewe!
 And thanne, saistow, we woln oure vices schewe.
 Thou saist also, that it displesith me
 But if that thou wilt praysen my beaute,
 And but thou pore alway in my face,
 And clepe me faire dame in every place;
 And but thou make a fest on thilke day
 That I was born, and make me freisch and gay;

¹ There is a common proverb in French of the same import:—'Chaque pot a son couvercle.'

² Tyrwhitt reads—

'And sayst it is an hard thing to welde
 A thing that no man will, his thankes, helde.'

In the glossary he interprets *welde*, *govern*. The meaning, not at first obvious, is, It is hard to be obliged to wield, or govern, a thing (meaning his wife) which no one would willingly continue to hold or possess. The expression, *his thanks*, like *his willes*, has been already explained, *ante*, p. 142, note 1.

And but thou do my norice honoure,
 And to my chamberer withinne my boure,
 And to my fadres folk, and myn allies:
 Thus saistow, olde barel ful of lies!
 And yit of oure apprentys Jankyn,
 For his crisp her, schynnyng as gold so fyn,
 And for he squiereth me up and down,
 Yet hastow caught a fals suspeccioun;
 I nyl him nought, though thou were deed to morwe.
 But tel me wherfor hydestow with sorwe
 The keyes of thy chist away fro me?
 It is my good as wel as thin, parde.¹ [dame?
 'What! wenest thou make an ydiot of oure
 Now by that lord that cleped is seint Jame,
 Thow schalt not bothe, though thou were wood,
 Be maister of my body and of my good;
 That oon thou schalt forgo maugre thin yen!
 What helpeth it on me tenqueren or espien?
 I trowe thou woldest lokke me in thy chest.
 Thou scholdist say, 'wif, go wher the lest;
 Take youre disport; I nyl lieve no talis;
 I know yow for a trewe wif, dame Alis.'
 We loveth no man, that takith keep or charge
 Wher that we goon; we love to be at large.
 'Of alle men i-blessed most he be
 The wise astrologe daun Ptholome,²
 That saith this proverbe in his Almagest:
 Of alle men his wisdom is highest,
 That rekkith not who hath the world in honde.
 By this proverbe thou schalt understonde,
 Have thou ynough, what thar the recch or care
 How merily that other folkes fare?
 For certes, olde dotard, with your leve,
 Ye schul have queynte right ynough at eve.

¹ *Scil.*, of me. So Numb. xvi. 14. Korah and Dathan exclaim 'Wilt thou put out the eyes of these men?'

² The Μεγαλη Συνταξις of Ptolemy, called by the Arabs *Almegisti*.

He is to gret a nygard that wol werne
 A man to light a candel at his lanterne;
 He schal have never the lasse light, parde.
 Have thou ynough, tue thar not pleyne the
 'Thou saist also, that if we make us gay
 With clothing and with precious array,
 That it is peril of our chastite.
 And yit, with sorwe, thou most enforce the,
 And say these wordes in thapostles name:¹
 In abytt maad with chastite and schame
 Ye wommen schuld apparayl yow, quod he,
 And nought with tressed her, and gay perré.
 As perles, ne with golden clothis riche.
 After thy text, ne after thin rubriche,
 I wol nought wirche as moche as a gnat.
 Thow saist thus that I was lik a cat;
 For who so wolde senge the cattes skyn,
 Than wold the catte duellen in his in;
 And if the cattes skyn be slyk and gay,
 Sche wol not duelle in house half a day,
 But forth sche wil, er eny day be dawet,
 To schewe hir skyn, and goon a caterwrawet.
 This is to say, if I be gay, sir schrewe,
 I wol renne aboute, my borel for to schewe.
 Sir olde fool, what helpith the to asprien?
 Though thou praydest Argus with his hundrid yen²
 To be my wardecorps, as he can best,
 In faith he schuld not kepe me but if me³ lest;
 Yit couthe I make his berd, though queynte he be.
 Thou saydest eek, that ther ben thinges thre,
 The whiche thinges troublen al this erthe,
 And that no wight may endure the ferthe.
 O leve sire schrewe, Jhesu schorte thy lif!
 Yit prechestow, and saist, an hateful wif
 I-rekened is for oon of these meschaunces.
 Ben ther noon other of thy resemblauches

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 9.² Ovid's *Metamorph.*³ The Harl. MS., followed by Mr. Wright, reads *he*, which makes no sense. *Me* is from Tyrwhitt.

That ye may liken youre parables unto,
 But if a cely wyf be oon of tho?
 Thow likenest wommannes love to helle,
 To bareyn lond, ther water may not duelle.
 Thou likenest it also to wilde fuyr;
 The more it brenneth, the more it hath desir
 To consume every thing, that brent wol be.
 Thou saist, right as wormes schenden a tre,
 Right so a wif schendith hir housebonde;
 This knowen tho that ben to wyves bonde.

Lordynges, right thus, as ye han understonde,
 Bar I styf myn housebondes on honde,
 That thus thay sayde in her dronkenesse;
 And al was fals, but that I took witnesse
 On Jankyn, and upon my nece also.
 O Lord, the peyne I dede hem, and the wo,
 Ful gulteles, by Goddes swete pyne;
 For as an hors, I couthe bothe bite and whyne;
 I couthe pleyne, and yet I was in the gilt,
 Or elles I hadde often tyme be spilt.
 Who so first cometh to the mylle, first grynt;¹
 I pleynd first, so was oure werre stynt.
 Thay were ful glad to excuse hem ful blyve
 Of thing, that thay never agilt in her lyve.
 And wenches wold I beren hem on honde,
 Whan that for seek thay might unnethes stonde,
 Yit tykeled I his herte for that he
 Wende I had of him so gret chierete.
 I swor that al my walkyng out a nyght
 Was for to aspie wenches that he dight.
 Under that colour had I many a mirthe.
 For al such witte is geven us of birthe;
 Deceipt wepyng, spynnyng, God hath give
 To wymmen kyndely¹ whil thay may lyve.²

¹ This proverb is found also in French, in the fifteenth century. —
 'Qui premier vient au moulin premier doit mouldre.'—W.

² This appears to have been a popular saying. In the margin of the
 Lansdowne MS it is given in a Latin leonine, thus:—

'Fallere, flere, nere, dedit Deus in muliere.'—W.

And thus of o thing I avaunte me,
 At thende I had the bet in ech degré,
 By sleight or fors, or of som maner thing,
 As by continuel murmur or chidyng,¹
 Namly on bedde, hadden thay meschaunce,
 Ther wold I chide, and do hem no plesaunce ;
 I wold no lenger in the bed abyde,
 If that I felt his arm over my syde,
 Til he had maad his raunsoun unto me,
 Than wold I suffre him doon his nycete.
 And therfor every man this tale telle,
 Wynne who so may, for al is for to selle ;
 With empty hond men may noon haukes lure,
 For wynnyng wold I al his lust endure,
 And make me a feyned appetyt,
 And yit in bacoun² had I never delyt ;
 That made me that ever I wold hem chyde.
 For though the pope had seten hem bisyde,
 I nold not spare hem at her oughne bord,
 For, by my trouthe, I quyt hem word for word.
 Als help me verray God omnipotent,
 Though I right now schuld make my testament,
 I owe hem nought a word, that it nys quitte,
 I brought it so aboute by my witte,
 That they most geve it up, as for the best,
 Or ellis had we never ben in rest.
 For though he loked as a gryn lyoun,
 Yit schuld he fayle of his conclusioun.
 Than wold I say, ' now, goode leef, tak keep,
 How mekly lokith Wilkyn our scheep !
 Com ner, my spouse, let me ba thy cheke.
 Ye schulde be al pacient and meke,
 And have a swete spiced consciens,³
 Siththen ye preche so of Jobes paciens.

¹ Most of the MSS. have, with Tyrwhitt, *grucchyng*.—W.

² Bacon is smoke-dried for keeping: the allusion would seem to be, therefore, to her husband's old age.

³ See *ante*. p. 99, note 2. It here appears to mean scrupulous.

Suffreth alway, syns yê so wel can preche,
 And but ye do, certeyn we schul yow teche
 That it is fair to have a wyf in pees.
 On of us tuo mot bowe douteles;
 And, siththen man is more resonable,
 Than womman is, ye moste be suffrable.
 What aylith yow thus for to grucche and
 grone?

Is it for ye wold have my queynt allone?
 Why, tak it al; lo, have it every del.
 Peter!¹ I schrewe yow but ye love it wel.
 For if I wolde selle my *bele chose*,
 I couthe walk as freisch as eny rose,
 But I wol kepe it for youre owne toth.
 Ye ben to blame, by God, I say yow soth!
 Such maner wordes hadde we on honde.

Now wol I speke of my fourth housbonde.
 My fourthe housbond was a revelour,
 This is to say, he had a paramour,
 And I was yong, and ful of ragerie,
 Stiborn and strong, and joly as a pye.
 How couthe I daunce to an harpe smale,
 And synge I wys as eny nightyngale,
 Whan I had dronke a draught of swete wyn.
 Metillius,² the foule cherl, the swyn,
 That with a staf byraft his wyf hir lyf
 For sche drank wyn, though I had ben his wif,
 Ne schuld he³ nought have daunted me fro
 drink;

And after wyn on Venus most I think.
 For al so siker as cold engendrith hayl,
 A likorous mouth most have a licorous tail.

- By St. Peter! a common oath, like 'Marry!' for St. Mary.

¹ The story is told by Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, lib. xiv. c. 13, of one Mecenius; but Chaucer probably quoted from *Valerius Maximus*, lib. vi. 3.

³ *He*, which is necessary both for the sense and metre, being omitted in the Harl. MS., is supplied from Tyrwhitt.

In wymmen vinolent is no defens,¹
 This knowen lecchours by experiens.
 But, lord Crist, whan that it remembrith me
 Upon my youthe, and on my jolite,
 It tikelith me aboute myn herte-roote!
 Unto this day it doth myn herte boote,
 That I have had my world as in my tyme.
 But age, alas ! that al wol envenyme,
 Hath me bireft my beauté and my pith ;
 Let go, farwel, the devyl go therwith.
 The flour is goon, ther nis no more to telle,
 The bran, as I best can, now mot I selle.
 But yit to be mery wol I fonde.

Now wol I telle of my fourt housbonde.
 I say, I had in herte gret despyt,
 That he of eny other had delit ;
 But he was quit, by God, and by seint Joce ;²
 I made him of the same woode a croce,³
 Nought of my body in no foul manere,
 But certeynly I made folk such chere,
 That in his owne grees I made him frie
 For anger, and for verray jealousy.
 By God, in erthe I was his purgatory,
 For which I hope his soule be in glory.
 For, God it wot, he sat ful stille and song,
 Whan that his scho ful bitterly him wrong.⁴
 Ther was no wight, sauf God and he, that wist
 In many wyse how sore I him twist.
 He dyed whan I cam fro Jerusalem,
 And lith i-grave under the roode-bem ;⁵

¹ From the *Roman de la Rose*:—

‘Car puisque femme est enyvree,
 El n’a point en soy de defense.’

² Saint Judocus, or Joce, was a saint of Ponthieu.—*Vocab. Hagiol.*
 prefixed to *Ménage*, *Etym. Franc.*—T.

³ I made him a cross, an instrument of torture, out of the same
 material that he tortured me with, *scil.*, jealousy.

⁴ An allusion to the story of the Roman sage, who, when blamed for
 divorcing his wife, said that a shoe might appear outwardly to fit well,
 but no one but the wearer knew where it pinched.—W.

⁵ Across the arch which usually divides the chancel from the nave

Al is his tombe nought so curious
 As was the sepulchre of him Darius,
 Which that Appellus wrought so subtilly.
 It nys but wast to burie him preciously.
 Let him farwel, God give his soule rest,
 He is now in his grave and in his chest.

‘ Now of my fifte housbond wol I telle ;
 God let his soule never come in helle !
 And yet was he to me the moste schrewe,
 That fele I on my ribbes alle on rewe,
 And ever schal, unto myn endyng day.
 But in oure bed he was so freisch and gay,
 And therwithal so wel he couthe me glose,
 Whan that he wold have my *bele chose*,
 That, though he had me bete on every boon,
 He couthe wynne my love right anoon.
 I trowe, I loved him beste, for that he
 Was of his love daungerous to me.
 We wymmen han, if that I schal nought lye,
 In this matier a queynte fantasie.
 Wayte,¹ what thyng we may not lightly have,
 Therafter wol we sonnest crie and crave.
 Forbeed us thing, and that desire we ;
 Pres on us fast, and thanne wol we fle.
 With daunger outhen alle we oure ware ;²
 Greet pres at market makith deer chaffare,
 And to greet chep is holden at litel pris ;
 This knowith every womman that is wys.
 My fyfth housbond, God his soule blesse,
 Which that I took for love and no richesse,
 He som tyme was a clerk of Oxenford,
 And had left scole, and went at hoom to borde

in English churches was stretched a *beam*, on which was placed a *rood*, that is, a figure of our Lord on the Cross, with the blessed Virgin and St. John standing on each side, as described in the Gospel of St. John. Under this her husband^d was buried.

¹ *Wayte* has here the force of the French *Tenez* ! Hold ! look ye !

² Difficulty in making our bargain makes us bring out all our *ware* for sale. For *outhen* Tyrwhitt reads *uttren* ; both mean the same.

With my gossib, duellyng in our toun :
 God have hir soule, hir name was Alsoun.
 Sche knew myn herte and my privite
 Bet than oure parisch prest, se mot I the.
 To hir bywreyed I my counseil al ;
 For had myn housbond pissed on a wal,
 Or don a thing that schuld have cost his lif,
 To hir, and to another worthy wyf,
 And to my neece, which I loved wel,
 I wold have told his counseil every del.
 And so I did ful ofte, God is woot,
 That made his face ofte reed and hoot
 For verry schame, and blamyd himself, that he
 Had told to me so gret a privete.
 And so byfel that oones in a Lent,
 (So ofte tyme to my gossib I went,
 For ever yit I loved to be gay,
 And for to walk in March, Averil, and May¹
 From hous to hous, to here sondry talis)
 That Jankyn clerk, and my gossib dame Alis,
 And I myself, into the feldes went.
 Myn housbond was at Londone al that Lent ;
 I had the bettir leysir for to pleye,
 And for to see, and eek for to be seye
 Of lusty folk ; what wist I wher my grace
 Was schapen for to be, or in what place ?²
 Therefore I made my visitaciouns³
 To vigiles, and to processions,
 To prechings eek, and to this pilgrimages,⁴
 To pleyes of miracles, and mariages,

¹ The Spring months, which were the season of the great festivals of Easter and Whitsuntide, invited to walk abroad.

² How did I know where it was destined that my favour was to be bestowed ?

³ From the *Roman de la Rose* :—

‘ Souvent voise à la mere eglise (the cathedral),
 Et face visitations

Aux nopces, aux processions,

Aux jeux, aux fêtes, aux caroles.’

⁴ Pilgrimages were often, as Percy well observes, made the pretext

And wered upon my gay scarlet gytes.
 These wormes, these moughtes, ne these mytes
 Upon my perel fretith hem never a deel,
 And wostow why? for thay were used wel.
 Now wol I telle forth what happid me :—
 I say, that in the feldes walkid we,
 Til trewely we had such daliaunce
 This clerk and I, that of my purvyaunce
 I spak to him, and sayde how that he,
 If I were wydow, schulde wedde me.
 For certeynly, I say for no bobaunce,
 Yit was I never withouten purveyaunce
 Of mariage, ne of no thinges eeke ;
 I hold a mouses hert not worth a leek,
 That hath but oon hole to sterte to,
 And if that faile, than is al i-do.
¹I bare him on hond he had enchanted² me ;
 (My dame taughte me that subtiltee)

for assignations. Thus, in *Pepys' Collection*, vol. i., p. 226, is a kind of Interlude, beginning :—

' As I went to Walsingham,
 To the shrine with speede,
 Met I with a jolly palmer,
 In a pilgrimes weede.
 ' Now God you save, you jolly palmer !'
 ' Welcome lady gay,
 Oft have I sued to thee for love,'
 ' Oft have I said you nay.'

In the *Vision of Pierce Plowman* also :—

' Hermets on an heape,
 With hoked staves,
 Wenten to Walsingham,
 With her wenches after.'

¹ This and the nine following lines are omitted in the Harl. MS. and others. The second Cambridge MS has them. They are here printed from Tyrwhitt.—W.

² The practice of endeavouring to obtain a reciprocation of love by means of philters and charms was common in the middle ages. It was derived from the classics (see Theocritus, *Φαρμακευτρίας*), and was a part of that lingering belief in the heathen mythology, as a system of dæmonology and witchcraft, which, though professing to ac

And eke I sayd, I met of him all night,
 He wold han slain me, as I lay upright,
 And all my bed was ful of veray blood;
 But yet I hope that ye shuln do me good;
 For blood betokeneth gold, as me was taught;
 And al was false, I dremed of him right naught,
 But as I folwed ay my dames lore,
 As wel of that as of other thinges more.
 But now, sir, let me se, what I schal sayn;
 A ha! by God, I have my tale agayn.¹
 'Whan that my fourthe housbond was on bere,
 I wept algate and made a sory cheere,
 As wyves mooten, for it is usage;
 And with my kerchief covered my visage;
 But, for that I was purveyed of a make,
 I wept but smal, and that I undertake.
 To chirche was myn housbond brought on morwe
 With neighebers that for him made sorwe,

knowledge the true God, sought to obtain benefits from the assistance of the Devil, and which is the key, not only to many superstitions of the time, but even to the (otherwise unaccountable) proneness of the Jewish people to fall into idolatry. Froissart relates, that Gaston de Foix, son of the celebrated Gaston, received a bag of powder from his uncle, Charles the Bad, with directions to sprinkle a small quantity over anything his father eat, the effect of which would be to restore his father's affection for Gaston's mother, who was at that time separated from her husband, and resident at Charles the Bad's Court. There is also an example in *Othello*, Act i. sc. 2:—

'Thou hast practised on her with foul charms,
 Abused her delicate youth with drugs or minerals
 That waken motion.'

Newton, in a book intended to assist in self-examination, called, *Tryall of a Man's owne self*, (1602, p. 116,) directs the penitent to inquire of his conscience under breaches of the seventh commandment, 'Whether by any secret sleight or cunning, as drinkes, drugges, medicines, charmed potions, amatorious philters, figures, characters, or any such like paltering instruments, devices, or practices, thou hast gone about to procure others to doate for love of thee.'

¹ This way of taking up the thread of the story is very dramatic and spirited, as well as characteristic of the Wyf of Bathes coolness and self-possession.

And Jankyn oure clerk was oon of tho.
 As help me God, whan that I saugh him go
 After the beere, me thought he had a paire
 Of legges and of feet so clene¹ and faire,
 That al myn hert I gaf unto his hold.
 He was, I trowe, twenty wynter old,
 And I was fourty, if I schal say the sothe,
 But yit I had alway a coltis tothe.
 Gattothid² I was, and that bycom me wel,
 I had the prynte of seynt Venus sel.
 As helpe me God, I was a lusty oon.
 And faire, and riche, and yonge, and wel begon;³
 And trewely, as myn housbonds tolde me,
 I had the best queynt that might be.
 For certes I am all venerian
 In felyng, and my herte is marcian:
 Venus me gave my lust and likerousnesse.
 And Mars gave me my sturdy hardinesse.
 Myn ascent was Taur, and Mars therinne;
 Allas, alas, that ever love was synne!
 I folwed ay myn inclinacioun:
 By vertu of my constillacioun:
 That made me that I couthe nought withdrawe
 My chambre of Venus from a good felawe.
 Yet have I Martes marke upon my face,
 And also in another privé place.
 For God so wisly be my salvacioun,
 I loved never by no discretioun,
 But ever folwed myn owne appetit,
 All were he shorte, longe, blake, or whit;
 I toke no kepe, so that he liked me,
 How povre he was, ne eek of what degre.

¹ *Clene* means, of course, *cleanly made*; without clumsiness or superfluous flesh.

² See *ante*, p. 97, note 3.

³ The Harl. MS. omits this and the seven following lines; also the eight lines beginning 'Yet have I,' &c. The second Cambridge MS. is the only one I have collated which contains them all. The Lansd. and first Cambridge MSS. omit the last eight. I have taken them from Tyrwhitt, collated with the MSS.—W.

What schuld I say? but at the monthis ende
 This joly clerk Jankyn, that was so heende,
 Hath weddid me with gret solempnitee,
 And to him gaf I al the lond and fee
 That ever was me give therbifore.
 But aftir-ward repented me ful sore.
 He noldre suffre nothing of my list.
 By God, he smot me oones with his fist,
 For I rent oones out of his book a lef,
 That of that strok myn eere wax al deef.
 Styborn I was, as is a leones,
 And of my tonge a verray jangleres,
 And walk I wold, as I had don biforn,
 Fro hous to hous, although he had it sworn;
 For which he ofte tymes wolde preche,
 And me of olde Romain gestes teche.
 How he Simplicius Gallus left his wyf,
 And hir forsok for terme of al his lyf,
 Nought but for open heedid¹ he hir say
 Lokying out at his dore upon a day.
 Another Romain told he me by name,
 That, for his wyf was at a somer² game
 Without his wityng, he forsok hir eeke.
 And thanne wold he upon his book seeke
 That ilke proverbe of Ecclesiaste,
 Wher he comaundeth, and forbedith faste,
 Man schal not suffre his wyf go roule aboute.³
 Than wold he say right thus withouten doute:

Who that buyldeth his hous al of salwes,
 And priketh his blynde hors over the falwes,
 And suffrith his wyf to go seken halwes,⁴
 Is worthy to be honged on the galwes.

But al for nought; I sette nought an hawe
 Of his proverbe, ne of his olde sawe;

¹ Literally translated from *Valerius Maximus*, lib. vi. c. 3, 'Uxorem dimisit, quod eam *capite aperto* versatam cognoverat.'—T.

² This expression arose from summer being the usual season for games. This story is also from *Valerius Maximus*, lib. vi. c. 3.

³ *Eccles.* xxv. 34.

⁴ To go on pilgrimages. See *ante*, p. 323, note 4.

Ne I wolde not of him corretted be.
 I hate him that my vices tellith me,
 And so doon mo, God it wot, than I.
 This made him with me wood al outerly;
 I nolde not forbere him in no cas.
 Now wol I say yow soth. by seint Thomas,
 Why that I rent out of **the** boc'k a leef,
 For which he smot me, that I was al deaf.
 He had a book, that gladly night and day
 For his desport he wolde rede alway;

He clepyd it Valerye and Theofrast,¹
 At which book he lough alway ful fast.
 And eek ther was som tyme a clerk at Rome,
 A cardynal, that heet seint Jerome,
 That made a book agens Jovynyan.
 In which book eek ther was Tertulyan,
 Crisippus, Tortula, and eek Helewys,
 That was abbas not fer fro Paris;
 And eek the parablis of Salamon,
 Ovydes Art, and bourdes many oon;
 And alle these were bound in oo volume.
 And every night and day was his custume,
 Whan he had leysir and vacacioun
 From other worldes occupacioun,
 To reden in this book of wikked wyves.
 He knew of hem mo legendes and lyves,
 Than ben of goode wyves in the Bible.
 For trustith wel, it is an impossible,

¹ *Epistola Valerii ad Rufinum, de non Ducenda Uxore* was written by the celebrated Walter Mapes, and will be found as a chapter in his work *De Nugis Curialium*, edited by Mr. Wright. It frequently occurs in MSS. by itself, and is often quoted as a separate book. *Liber Aureolus Theophrasti, de Nuptiis*, is quoted by St. Jerome, *Contra Jovinianum*. To these two books Jean de Meun has been obliged for some of the severest strokes in his *Roman de la Rose*; and Chaucer has transferred the quintessence of all the three works (upon the subject of matrimony) into his *Wyf of Bathes Prologe* and *Marchaundes Tale*. The other works here mentioned, *Tertullian de Pallio*, the *Letters of Eloisa to Abelard*, and Ovid's *Art of Love*, are well known. Tyrwhitt says, 'I know of no *Trotula* but one, whose book, *Curandarum Aegritudinum Muliebrium ante, in, et post partus*, is printed *inter Medicos Antiquos*, Ven. 1547. What is meant by *Crisippus* I cannot guess.'

That any clerk schal speke good of wyves,
 But if it be of holy seintes lyves,
 Ne of noon other wyfes never the mo.
 Who peyntid the leoun, tel me, who?
 By God, if wommen hadde writen stories,
 As clerkes have withinne her oratories,
 Thay wold have write of men more wickidnes,
 Than al the mark of Adam may redres.
 These children of Mercury and of Venus¹
 Ben in her werkynge ful contrarious.
 Mercury lovith wisdom and science,
 And Venus loveth ryot and dispense.
 And for her divers disposicioun,
 Ech fallith in otheres exaltacioun.²
 And thus, God wot, Mercury is desolate
 In Pisces, wher Venus is exaltate,
 And Venus faylith wher Mercury is reysed.
 Therfor no womman of clerkes is preised.
 The clerk whan he is old, and may nought do
 Of Venus werkis, is not worth a scho;
 Than sit he doun, and writ in his dotage,
 That wommen can nought kepe here mariage.
 But now to purpos, why I tolde the,
 That I was beten for a leef, parde.
 Upon a night Jankyn, that was oure sire,
 Rad on his book, as he sat by the fyre,
 Of Eva first, that for hir wikkidnes
 Was al mankynde brought to wrecchednes,
 For which that Jhesu Crist himself was slayn,
 That bought us with his herte-blood agayn.
 Lo here expresse of wommen may ye fynde,
 That woman was the losc of al mankynde.

¹ The pursuit of love, which is inspired by Venus, is incompatible with study, over which, and all its concomitants, presides Mercury.

² In the old Astrology, a planet was said to be in its *exaltation* when it was in that sign of the Zodiac in which it was supposed to exert its strongest influence. The opposite sign was called its *dejection*, as in that it was supposed to be the weakest. To take the instance in the text, the exaltation of Venus was in *Pisces*, and her *dejection*, of course, in *Virgo*. But in *Virgo* was the *exaltation* of Mercury.—T.

Tho rad he me how Sampson left his heris
 Slepynge, his lemman kut hem with hir scheria,
 Thurgh which tresoun lost he bothe his yen.
 Tho rad¹ he me, if that I schal not lyen,
 Of Ercules, and of his Dejanyre,
 That caused him to sette himself on fuyre.
 No thing forgat he the care and wo
 That Socrates had with his wyves tuo;
 How Exantipa² cast pisse upon his heed.
 This seely man sat stille, as he were deed,
 He wyped his heed, no more durst he sayn,
 But 'Er thunder stynte ther cometh rayn.'
 Of Phasipha, that was the queen of Creete,
 For schrewednes him thought the tale sweete.
 Fy! spek no more, it is a grisly thing,
 Of her horribil lust and her likyng.
 Of Clydemystra for hir leccherie
 That falsly made hir housbond for to dye,
 He rad it with ful good devocioun.
 He told me eek, for what occasioun
 Amphiores at Thebes left his lif;
 Myn housbond had a legend of his wyf
 Exiphilem, that for an ouche of gold
 Hath prively unto the Grekes told
 Wher that her housbond hyd him in a place,
 For which he had at Thebes sory grace.
 Of Lyma told he me, and of Lucy;e;
 Thay bothe made her housbondes for to dye,
 That oon for love, that other was for hate.
 Lyma³ hir housbond on an even late
 Empoysond hath, for that sche was his fo;
 Lucia licorous loved hir housbond so,

¹ Most of the following instances are mentioned in the *Epist. Valerii ad Rufinum*. See also *Roman de la Rose*, 9615.

² Xantippe. In the other proper names in the following lines I have retained the corrupt orthography of the age, as given in the MS. *Phasipha* is, of course, *Pasiphae*; *Clydemystra*, *Clytemnestra*; *Amphiores*, *Amphiarus*; *Exiphilem*, *Eriphyle*, &c.—W.

³ The story is told in the *Epist. Valerii*. 'Luna [here called Lyma] virum suum interfecit quem nimis odivit; Lucelia suum, quem nimis

For that he schuld alway upon hir think,
 Sche gaf him such a maner love-drink,
 That he was deed er it was by the morwe;
 And thus algates housbondes had sorwe.
 Than told he me, how oon Latumyus
 Compleigned unto his felaw Arrius,
 That in his gardyn growed such a tre,
 On which he sayde how that his wyves thre
 Honged hemselfe for herte despitous.
 ' O leve brother,' quod this Arrius,
 ' Gif me a plont of thilke blessid tre,
 And in my gardyn schal it plantid be.'
 Of latter date of wyves hath he red
 That some han slayn her housbondes in her bed,
 And let her lecchour dighten al the night,
 Whil that the corps lay in the flor upright;
 And som han dryven nayles in her brayn,
 Whiles thay sleepe, and thus they han hem slayn;
 Som have hem give poysoun in her drink;
 He spak more harm than herte may bythynk.
 And therwithal he knew mo proverbes
 Than in this world ther growen gres or herbes.
 ' Better is, quod he, thyn habitacioun
 Be with a leoun, or a foul dragoun,
 Than with a womman using for to chyde.
 Better is, quod he, hihe in the roof abyde,
 Than with an angry womman doun in a hous;
 They ben so wicked and so contrarious,
 Thay haten that her housbondes loven ay.
 He sayd, a womman cast hir schame away,
 Whan sche cast of hir smok; and forthermo,
 A fair womman, but sche be chast also,
 Is lyk a gold ryng in a sowes nose.
 Who wolde wene, or who wolde suppose

amavit. Illa sponte miscuit aconita; hæc decepta furorem propinavit pro amoris proculo.—See TYRWHITT. This is a humorous way of proving that a wife is a man's destruction, whether she love or hate.

¹ Prov. xxi. 9, 12, xi. 22.

The wo that in myn herte was and pyne?
And whan I saugh he nolde never fyne
To reden on this cursed book al night,
Al sodeinly thre leves have I plight
Out of this booke that he had, and eeke
I with my fist so took him on the cheeke,
That in oure fuyr he fel bak-ward adoun.
And he upstert, as doth a wood leoun,
And with his fist he smot me on the hed,
That in the floor I lay as I were deed.
And whan he saugh so stille that I lay,
He was agast, and wold have fled away.
Til atte last out of my swown I brayde.
' O, hastow slayn me, false thef? ' I sayde,
' And for my lond thus hastow mourdrid me?
Er I be deed, yit wol I kisse the.'
And ner he cam, and knelith faire adoun,
And sayde, ' Deere suster Alisoun,
As help me God, I schal the never smyte;
That I have doon it is thiself to wite;
Forgive it me, and that I the biseke.'
And yet eftsones I hyt him on the cheke,
And sayde, ' Thef, thus mekil I me wreke.
Now wol I dye, I may no lenger speke.'
But atte last, with mochil care and wo,
We fyl accordid by ourselven tuo;
He gaf me al the bridil in myn hand
To have the governaunce of hous and land,
And of his tonge, and of his hond also,
And made him brenne his book anon right tho.
And whan I hadde geten unto me
By maistry all the sovereynete,
And that he seyde, ' Myn owne trewe wyf,
Do as the list the term of al thy lyf,
Kepe thyn honour, and kep eek myn estat;'
And after that day we never had debat.
God help me so, I was to him as kynde
As eny wyf fro Denmark unto Inde,

And al so trewe was he unto me.

I pray to God that sitte in mageste

So blesse his soule, for his mercy deere.

Now wol I say my tale, if ye wol heere.'

The Frere lough when he had herd al this:

'Now, dame,' quod he, 'so have I joye and blis,

This a long preambel of a tale.'

And whan the Sompnour herd the Frere gale,

'Lo!' quod this Sompnour, 'for Goddes armes tuo,

A frer wol entremet him evermo.

Lo, goode men, a flie and eek a frere

Woln falle in every dissche and matiere.

What spekst thou of perambulacioun?¹

What? ambil, or trot; or pees, or go sit down;

Thou lettest oure disport in this matere.'

'Ye, woltow so, sir sompnour!' quod the Frere:

'Now, by my fay, I schal, er that I go,

Telle of a sompnour such a tale or tuo,

That alle the folke schuln laughen in this place.'

'Now, ellis, frere, I byschrew thy face,'²

Quod this Sompnour, 'and I byschrewe me,

But if I telle tales tuo or thre

Of freres, er I come to Sydingborne,'³

That I schall make thin herte for to morne;

For wel I wot thy paciens is goon.'

Oure Hoste cride, 'Pees, and that anoon;'

And sayde, 'Let the womman telle hir tale.

Ye fare as folkes that dronken ben of ale.

Do, dame, tel forth your tale, and that is best.'

'Al redy, sir,' quod sche, 'right as you lest,

If I have licence of this worthy frere.'

'Yis, dame,' quod he, 'tel forth, and I schal heere.'

¹ The Sompnour's ear is caught by the word *preamble*, which he supposes to allude to his professional *perambulations*.

² The meaning is, I accept your challenge. Do your worst, and if you do not, I beshrew or invoke a curse on your face.

³ Sittingbourne, about half way between Rochester and Canterbury.

THE WYF OF BATHES TALE.

[THE story told by this celebrated personage may be considered as an illustration of her prologue, her object in both being to show that what women most desire, and what they moreover ought to have, is their will. The story of *Florent*, in Gower, and *The Marriage of Sir Gawaine*, in *Percy's Reliques*, are both founded upon this theme. Percy says that the latter 'is chiefly taken from the fragment of an old ballad in the Editor's MS., which he has reason to believe more ancient than the time of Chaucer, and what furnished that bard with *The Wyf of Bathes Tale*. Tyrwhitt thinks that both Chaucer's and Gower's versions are taken from an older narrative in the *Gesta Romanorum*, or some such collection; and that *The Marriage of Sir Gawaine* was written by some one who had seen both. Percy may, however, be right; for he states that *his* ballad was only *founded on* a mutilated copy, the deficiencies of which he probably supplied from Gower and Chaucer; and this may account for the impression which his ballad conveyed to Tyrwhitt. The characteristic peculiarities of this bold and witty woman of the world are well preserved in her manner of relating the story.]

IN olde dayes of the kyng Arthour,¹
Of which that Britouns speken gret honour,

¹ All that is now known of this celebrated hero of romance is contained in the *History of Geoffrey of Monmouth*, a Welsh Benedictine monk, who about the year 1128 translated into Latin an ancient chronicle in the Welsh or British language, entitled *Brut-y-Brenihed*; or, *the History of the Kings of Britain*, and discovered about the year 1100 by Walter Archdeacon of Oxford, in Armorica or Bretagne. What became of the British original is not known; and all the numerous romances on the same subject are supposed to be subsequent to, and derived from Geoffrey's Latin translation. Arthur's very existence has been called in question; but this arose probably from the idea prevalent among the antiquaries of the last century, that it was a point of honour to disbelieve anything told by a monk; yet it seems unphilosophical to reject a popular tradition preserved in all the national poetry of the Welsh and Britons of a period not very far removed from the date of their hero's existence, which is assigned to about the year 506. It would be endless to enumerate the romances and ballads founded on

Al was this lond fulfilled of fayrie ;¹
The elf-queen,² with hir joly compaignye,

Arthur's exploits and magnificence, which formed the delight and the model of princes and knights in the days of Chaucer. Walsingham relates that Edward III., after his triumphant return from Scotland, established in the castle of Windsor a fraternity of twenty-four knights, for whom he erected a round table, with a round chamber, which still remains, according to a similar institution of King Arthur.

¹ The ancient Britons of the time of Arthur were a mixed race, composed of the aboriginal inhabitants and the Roman colonists, who brought with them from Italy that beautiful form of pantheism which still lives in the pages of Ovid. But when Christianity emerged from the catacombs, it was not long in reaching the most distant colonies ; and its missionaries taught the people to regard their old deities as evil spirits, who had adopted that mode of withdrawing them from the worship of the true God. Thus in Acts xvi. St. Paul is said to have cast out of a young woman an evil spirit of *Python*, or Apollo, which had enabled her to prophesy ; and, 1 Cor. x. 20, he says, ' The things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to dæmons.' Following Scripture, our great Christian poet, in his enumeration of the fallen spirits who first rose from the burning lake, after mentioning the gods of the Philistines describes the classic deities—

' The rest were long to tell, though far renowned ;
The Ionian gods, of Javan's issue held
Gods.

These first in Crete
And Ida known, thence on the snowy top
Of cold Olympus, ruled the middle air,
Their highest Heaven ; on the Delphian cliff,
Or in Dodona, and through all the bounds
Of Doric land.'

But though the Church taught that these idols were ministers of the Evil Spirit, whom Christians had renounced, it was difficult to eradicate a form of pantheism so fascinating that even now it captivates many minds ; and so the matter was compromised. Like the Israelites, under similar circumstances, the people ' worshipped Jehovah, and served Baalim ;' and hence was derived the belief in those mysterious beings, who, like the gods of Greece and Rome, personified the powers of nature and the passions of the human heart ; who peopled every grove and stream, and rode upon the eddying whirlwind ; who were neither absolutely good nor utterly evil, but ' ruled the middle air ;' and who were therefore regarded with a mixture of fear and good-will by the ancient Britons at the period when the Roman traditions had not yet had time to die away. Then it was that the land was ' fulfilled of fayrie,' that is, with the lingering worship of the deities of ancient Rome, which was afterwards mingled with the Gothic mythology.

² The Queen of Fairy, who represented Proserpine in the old mythology. See *Marchaundes Tale*.

Daunced ful oft in many a grene mede.
 This was the old oppynyoun, as I rede ;
 I speke of many hundrid yer ago ;
 But now can no man see noon elves mo.
 For now the grete charite and prayeres
 Of lymytours and other holy freres,
 That sechen every lond and every streem,
 As thik as motis in the sonne-beem,
 Blessyng halles, chambres, kichenes, and boures,
 Citees and burghes, castels hihe and toures,
 Thropes and bernes, shepnes and dayeries,¹
 That makith that ther ben no fayeries.
 For ther as wont was to walken an elf,
 Ther walkith noon but the lymytour himself,
 In undermeles and in morwenynges,
 And saith his matyns and his holy thinges
 As he goth in his lymytatioun.²
 Wommen may now go sauflly up and down ;
 In every bussch, and under every tre,
 Ther is non other incubus³ but he,

¹ In the old rituals are forms of invoking a blessing upon everything dedicated to the service of man. There is a *Benedictio domorum, loci, domus novæ, thalami, novæ navis* (a great deal better than our profane form of 'christening' a vessel) *novorum fructuum*, &c. Of these forms our custom of 'saying grace' or 'blessing the meat,' as the Scots say, is a remnant.

² All religious persons were bound, if possible, to recite the divine office, here called 'his matyns and his holy thinges,' at the proper hour, in the choir; but secular priests, not living in cominon, and friars, being by their rule obliged to walk about within their limitation to beg their maintenance, were allowed to say it privately at 'undermeles,' after dinner, as they walked. Of this there is a vestige in the order prefixed to our *Book of Common Prayer*, which directs that all priests and deacons shall say the matins and evensong, either publicly or privately, not being hindered by sickness. See *Schipman's Tale*.

³ This is an example of Chaucer's light and well-bred satire;—he says just enough to raise a smile at the person satirised, and passes on without effort or ill-humour to the main subject. Of the propensities of the incubus, whose place the friar is supposed to have taken, we may judge from the exquisite ballad of *Tamlane*, given in *Scott's Border Minstrelsy*, vol. ii. :—

'O, I forbid ye maidens a',
 That wear gowd in your hair,
 To come or gae by Carterhaugh,
 For young Tamlane is there.

And he ne wol doon hem no dishonour.¹

And so bifel it, that this king Arthour
Had in his hous a lusty bacheler,
That ou a day com rydyng fro ryver;²
And happed, al alone as sche was born,
He saugh a mayde walkyng him byforn,
Of which mayden anoon, maugre hir heed,
By verray fors byraft hir maydenhed.
For which oppressioun was such clamour,
And such pursuyte unto kyng Arthour,
That dampned was the knight and schuld be ded
By cours of lawe, and schuld have lost his heed,
(Paraventure such was the statut tho,)
But that the queen and other ladys mo
So longe preyeden they the kyng of grace,
Til he his lif hath graunted in the place,

There's nane that gaes by Carterhaugh,
But maun give him a wad,
Either gowd rings or green mantles,
Or else their maidenhead.'

The fair Janet, however, despises the warning, and when questioned by her father, says,—

'If my love were an earthly wight,
As he's an *elfin gray*,' &c.

The incubus, in fact, corresponds with the Jupiters, Apollos, and Plutos of the old mythology, and from them inherited his love for mortal beauties. This proved often a convenient belief; and Scott relates a story of a lady who accounted to her lord on his return from the Crusade for the presence of a boy, whose age could not be made to correspond with the time of his departure, by declaring that the river Tweed had insisted on becoming the father of her son, who was afterwards the ancestor of the well-known family of Tweeddie. Thus, in Dunbar's *Golden Targe*,—

'Thair was Pluto, that elritch *incubus*,
In cloke of greene.'

The allusion appears to be to the *Rape of Proserpine*. See also Mercutio's description of Queen Mab, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act i. sc. 4.

¹ The Harl. MS. reads this line, evidently incorrectly, *And ne wol but doon hem dishonour*. In the previous line the same manuscript reads erroneously *incumbent*, instead of *incubus*.—W.

² It means from hawking at water-fowl. Froissart, vol. i. c. l. 140, says:—'Le comte de Flandres estolt toujours *en riviere*—un jour advint qu'il alla voller *en la riviere*—et getta son fauconier un faucon apres le heron.' Sire Thopas is described as following this knightly sport.

And gaf him to the queen, al at hir wille
 To chese wethir sche wold him save or spille.
 The queen thanked the kyng with al hir might;
 And after thus sche spak unto the knight.
 Whan that sche saugh hir tyme upon a day:
 'Thow stondest yet,' quod sche, 'in such array,
 That of thy lyf hastow no sewerte;
 I graunte thy lif, if thou canst telle me,
 What thing is it that wommen most desiren;
 Be war, and keep thy nek-bon fro the iren.
 And if thou canst not tellen it anoon,
 Yet wol I give the leve for to goon
 A twelfmonth and a day,¹ it for to lere
 An answer suffisant in this matiere.
 And seurte wol I have, er that thou pacc,
 Thy body for to yelden in this place.'
 Wo was this knight, and sorwfully he siked;
 But what? he may not doon al as him liked,
 And atte last he ches him for to wende,
 And come agein right at the yeres ende
 With swich answer as God him wolde purveye;
 And takith his leve, and wendith forth his weye.
 He sekith every hous and every place,
 Wher so he hopith for to fynde grace,
 To lerne what thing wommen loven most;
 But he ne couthe arryven in no cost,
 Wher as he mighte fynde in this mattiere
 Two creatures accordyng in fere.²
 Some sayden, wommen loven best richesse,
 Some sayde honour, and some sayde jolynesse,
 Some riche array, some sayden lust on bedde,
 And ofte tyme to be wydow and wedde.

¹ There seems to have been some mysterious importance attached to this particular time of grace: perhaps the day was allowed the criminal over and above the full time of a year, so that he might not suffer from any merely accidental detention, on the same principle that the prisoner is entitled to the benefit of any doubt which may remain in the minds of the jury.

² The Harl. MS. reads, *To these thinges accordyng in fere.*—W.

Some sayden owre herte is most i-eased
 Whan we ben y-flaterid and y-preised ;¹
 He goth ful neigh the soth, I wil not lye ;
 A man schal wynne us best with flaterye ;
 And with attendaunce, and with busynesse
 Ben we y-limid both more and lesse.
 And some sayen, that we loven best
 For to be fre, and to doon as us lest,
 And that no man repreve us of oure vice,
 But say that we ben wys, and no thing nyce.
 For trewely ther is noon of us alle,
 If eny wight wold claw us on the galle,²
 That we nyl like, for he saith us soth ;
 Assay, and he schal fynde it, that so doth.
 For he we never so vicious withinne,
 We schuln be holde wys and clene of synne.
 And some sayen, that gret delit han we
 For to be holden stabil and secre,
 And in oon purpos stedfastly to duelle,
 And nought bywreye thing that men us telle.
 But that tale is not worth a rakes stele.
 Pardy, we wymmen can right no thing hele,
 Witnes on Mida ; wil ye here the tale ?
 Ovyd,³ among his other thinges smale,
 Sayde Mida had under his lange heris
 Growyng upon his heed tuo asses eeris ;
 The whiche vice he hid, as he best might,
 Ful subtilly fro every mannes sight,
 That, save his wyf, ther wist of that nomo ;
 He loved hir most, and trusted hir also ;
 He prayed hir, that to no creature
 Sche schulde tellen of his disfigure.

¹ The Harl. MS. reads *y-pleased*; but the reading I have adopted seems to give the best sense.—W.

² This expression means, literally, to rub or stroke on a sore place; metaphorically, to flatter us in that very particular in which we feel ourselves deficient.

³ Ovid, *Metamorph.*, lib. xi.

Sche swor him, nay, for al this world to wyne,
 Sche nolde do that vilonye or synne
 To make hir housband have so foul a name;
 Sche wold not tel it for hir oughne schame.
 But natheles hir thoughte that sche dyde,
 That sche so longe a counseil scholde hyde;
 Hir thought it swal so sore about hir hert,
 That needely som word hir most astert;
 And sins sche dorst not tel it unto man,
 Doun to a marreys faste by sche ran,
 Til sche cam ther, hir herte was on fuyre;
 And as a bytoure¹ bumblith in the myre,
 Sche layde hir mouth unto the water doun.
 'Bywrey me not, thou watir, with thi soun.'
 Quod sche, 'to the I telle it, and nomo,
 Myn housbond hath long asse eeris tuo.
 Now is myn hert al hool, now is it oute,
 I might no lenger kepe it out of doute.'
 Her may ye se, theigh we a tyme abyde,
 Yet out it moot, we can no counseil hyde.
 The remenaunt of the tale, if ye wil here,
 Redith Ovid, and ther ye mow it leere.

This knight, of which my tale is specially,
 Whan that he saugh he might nought come therby,
 This is to say, that wommen loven most,
 Withinne his brest ful sorwful was the gost.
 But hom he goth, he might not lenger sojourne,
 The day was come, that hom-ward most he torne.
 And in his way, it hapnyd him to ride
 In al his care, under a forest side,
 Wher as he saugh upon a daunce go
 Of ladys four and twenty, and yit mo
 Toward this ilke daunce he drough ful yerne,
 In hope that he som wisdom schuld i-lerne;

¹ The bittern is said to make its peculiar noise, which is called bumbling, by thrusting its bill into the mud, and blowing.—See BEWICK'S *British Birds*.

But certeynly, er he com fully there,
 Vanysshid was this daunce, he nyste where;
 No creature saugh he that bar lif,
 Sauf on the greene he saugh sittying a wyf,
 A fouler wight ther may no man devyse.
 Agens the knight this olde wyf gan ryse,
 And sayd, 'Sir knight, heer forth lith no way;
 Tel me what ye seekyn, by your fay
 Paradventure it may the better be:
 This olde folk con mochil thing,' quod sche,
 'My lieve modir,' quod this knight, 'certayn
 I am but ded but if that I can sayn
 What thing is it that wommen most desirc;
 Couthe ye me wisse, I wold wel quyt your huyre.'
 'Plight me thy trouth her in myn hond,' quod sche,
 'The nexte thing that I require the,
 Thou schalt it doo, if it be in thy might,
 And I wol telle it the, er it be night.'
 'Have her my trouthe,' quod the knight, 'I graunte.'
 'Thannc,' quod sche, 'I dar me wel avaunte,
 Thy lif is sauf, for I wol stonde therby,
 Upon my lif the queen wol say as I;
 Let se, which is the proudest of hem alle,
 That werith on a coverchief or a calle,
 That dar say nay of thing I schal the teche.
 Let us go forth withouten more speche.'
 Tho rowned sche a pistil in his eere,
 And bad him to be glad, and have no fere.
 Whan thay ben comen to the court, this knight
 Sayd, he had holde his day, that he hight,
 Al redy was his answer, as he sayde.
 Ful many a noble wyf, and many a mayde,
 And many a wydow, for that thay ben wyse,
 The queen hirself sittying as a justise,¹

¹ Queen Guenever is represented sitting as judge in a 'Court of Love,' similar to those in fashion in later ages, of the proceedings of which we have a 'report,' in his poem called *The Court of Love* (vol. iv. p. 260). Fontenelle (in the third vol. of his works, Paris, 1742) has given a de-

Assemblid ben, his answer for to hiere;
 And after-ward this knight was bode appiere,
 To every wight comaundid was silence,
 And that the knight schuld telle in audience
 What thing that worldly wommen loven best.

This knight ne stood not stille, as doth a best,
 But to the questioun anoon answerde,
 With manly voys, that al the court it herde;
 'My liege lady, generally,' quod he,
 'Wommen desiren to have soveraynte
 As wel over hir housbond as over hir love,
 And for to be in maystry him above.
 This is your most desir, though ye me kille;
 Doth as yow list, I am heer at your wille.'
 In al the court ne was ther wyf, ne mayde,
 Ne wydow, that contraried that he sayde;
 But sayden, he was worthy have his lif.
 And with that word upstart that olde wif,
 Which that the knight saugh sitting on the grene.
 'Mercy,' quod sche, 'my sovereign lady queene,
 Er that your court departe, doth me right.
 I taughte this answer unto the knight;
 For which he plichte me his trouthe there,
 The firste thing that I wold him requere,
 He wold it do, if it lay in his might.
 Before this court then pray I the, sir knight,
 Quod sche, 'that thou me take unto thy wif,
 For wel thou wost, that I have kept thy lif;
 If I say fals, sey nay, upon thy fey.'
 This knight answerd, 'Allas and waylawey!'

scription of one of the fantastic suits tried in these courts. About the year 1206, the Queen of France was appealed to from an unjust sentence pronounced in the Court of Love of the Countess of Champagne; but the Queen replied, 'God forbid that I should presume to reverse the sentence of the Countess of Champagne!' The best source of information on these strange follies is a book entitled *Erotica, seu Amatoria, Andreæ Capellarii Regis*, &c., written about A.D. 1170, and published at Dorpmund in 1610.

¹ The knight's unwillingness is more natural, and affords a better contrast to the sequel, than Sir Gawaine's excessive complaisance in Percy's ballad.

I wot right wel that such was my byhest.
 For Goddes love, as chese a new request ;
 Tak al my good, and let my body go.'
 'Nay,' quod sche than, 'I schrew us bothe tuo.
 For though that I be foule, old, and pore,
 I nolde for al the metal ne for the ore
 That under erthe is grave, or lith above,
 But I thy wife were and eek thy love.'
 'My love?' quod he, 'nay, nay, my dampnacioun.

Allas! that eny of my nacioun
 Schuld ever so foule disparagid be!
 But al for nought; the ende is this, that he
 Constreigned was, he needes most hir wedde,
 And takith his wyf, and goth with hir to bedde.

Now wolden som men say paraventure,
 That for my necgligence I do no cure
 To telle yow the joye and tharray
 That at that fest was maad that ilke day.
 To which thing schortly answeren I schal,
 And say ther nas feste ne joy at al,
 Ther nas but hevynes and mochil sorwe ;
 For prively he weddyd hir in a morwe,
 And alday hudde him as doth an oule,
 So wo was him, his wyf loked so foule.
 Gret was the wo the knight had in his thought
 Whan he was with his wyf on bedde brought,
 He walwith, and he torneth to and fro.
 His olde wyf lay smylyng ever mo,
 And sayd, 'O deere housbond, *benedicite*,
 Fareth every knight with his wyf as ye!
 Is this the lawe of king Arthures hous?
 Is every knight of his thus daungerous?
 I am your oughne love, and eek your wyf,
 I am sche that hath savyd your lyf,
 And certes ne dede I yow never unright.
 Why fare ye thus with me the firste night?
 Ye fare lik a man that had left his wit.
 What is my gult? for Godes love, tel me

And it schal be amendid, if that I may.
 'Amendid!' quod this knight, 'allas! nay, nay,
 It wol nought ben amendid, never mo;
 Thow art so lothly, and so old also,
 And therto comen of so lowh a kynde,
 That litil wonder is though I walwe and wynde;
 So wolde God, myn herte wolde brest!
 'Is this,' quod sche, 'the cause of your unrest?'
 'Ye, certeynly,' quod he, 'no wonder is!'
 'Now, sire,' quod sche, 'I couthe amende all
 this,

If that me list, er it were dayes thre,
 So wel ye mighte bere yow to me.
 But for ye speken of such gentillesse
 As is descendit out of old richesse,
 Therfor schuld ye ben holden gentil men;
 Such arrogaunce is not worth an hen.
 Lok who that is most vertuous alway,
 Prive and pert,¹ and most entendith ay
 To do the gentil dedes that he can,
 Tak him for the grettest gentil man.
 Crist wol we clayme of him oure gentillesse.²
 Nought of oure eldres for her olde richesse.³
 For though thay give us al her heritage,
 For which we clayme to be of high parage,
 Yit may thay not biquethe, for no thing,
 To noon of us, so vertuous lyvyng,
 That made hem gentil men y-callid be,
 And bad us folwe hem in such degre.
 Wel can the wyse poet of Florence,
 That hatte Daunt, speke of this sentence;

¹ Most virtuous both privately and before the world. *Pert* is put for *aperi*, open.

² Christ desires that we should rest our claim to nobility on Him, that is, on our virtue, which is His gift.

³ The Harl. MS. reads, *for our gret richessee*.

Lo, in such maner of rym is Dauntes tale;
 Ful seeld uprisith by his braunchis smale¹
 Prowes of man, for God of his prowesse
 Wol that we claime of him our gentillesse;
 For of our auncestres we no thing clayme
 But temporal thing, that men may hurt and
 mayme.

Ek every wight wot this as wel as I,
 If gentiles were plaunted naturelly
 Unto a certayn lignage doun the line,
 Prive ne apert, thay wolde never fine
 To don of gentilesce the fair office,
 Thay might nought doon no vileny or vice.
 Tak fuyr and ber it in the derkest hous
 Bitwixe this and the mount Caukasous,
 And let men shit the dores, and go thenne,
 Yit wol the fuyr as fair and lighte brenne
 As twenty thousand men might it biholde;
 His office naturel ay wol it holde,
 Up peril on my lif, til that it dye.
 Her may ye se wel, how that genterye
 Is nought annexid to possessioun,
 Sithins folk ne doon her operacioun
 Alway, as doth the fuyr, lo,² in his kynde.
 For God it wot, men may ful often fynde
 A lordes sone do schame and vilonye.
 And he that wol have pris of his gentrie,
 For he was boren of a gentil hous,
 And had his eldres noble and vertuuous,
 And nyl himselve doo no gentil dedes
 Ne folw his gentil aunceter, that deed is,

¹ Dante, *Purgatorio*, vii. 121:—

‘Rade volte risurge per li rami
 L’humana probitate; ed questo vuole
 Quei che la da, perche da se si chiama.’

² Lo: is here very expressive; it means, as you can see.

He is nought gentil, be he duk or erl ;
 For vileyn synful deedes maketh a cherl,
 For gentilnesse nys but renome
 Of thin auncestres, for her heigh bounte,
 Which is a straunge thing to thy persone ;
 Thy gentilesce cometh fro God alloone.
 Than comth oure verray gentilesse of grace,
 It was no thing biquethe us with oure place.
 Thinketh how nobil, as saith Valerius,
 Was thilke Tullius Hostilius,
 That out of povert ros to high noblesse.
 Redith Senek, and redith eek Boece,
 Ther schuln ye se expresse, that no dred is,
 That he is gentil that doth gentil dedis.
 And therfor, lieve housborid, I conclude,
 Al were it that myn auncetres wer rude,
 Yit may the highe God, and so hope I,
 Graunte me grace to lyve vertuously ;
 Than am I gentil, whan that I bygynne
 To lyve vertuously, and weyven synne.
 And ther as ye of povert me repreve,
 The heighe God, on whom that we bilieve,
 In wilful povert ches to lede his lif ;¹
 And certes, every man, mayden, or wyf.
 May understonde that Jhesus, heven king,
 Ne wold not chese a vicious lyvyng.
 Glad povert is an honest thing certayn ;
 This wol Senek and other clerkes sayn.
 Who that holt him payd of his povert,
 I holde him riche, al had he nought a schert.
 He that coveitith is a pore wight,
 For he wold have that is not in his might.
 But he that nought hath, ne coveyteth nought to
 have,
 Is riche, although ye hold him but a knave ;

¹The Harl. MS. has *lese*, which appears to have been a mere error of the scribe.—W.

Verray povert is synne proprely.

‘ Juvenal¹ saith of povert, merily
The pore man whan he goth by the way
Bifore the theves he may synge and play.
Povert is hateful good; and, as I gesse,
A ful gret brynger out of busynesse;
A gret amender eek of sapiens
To him that takith it in paciens.
Povert is this, although it seme elenge,²
Possessioun that no wight wil chalenge.
Povert, ful often, whan a man is lowe,
Makith him his God and eek himself to knowe.
Povert a spectacle is, as thinkith me,
Thurgh which he may his verray frendes se;
And therfor, sir, syth that I yow nought greve,
Of my povert no more me repreve.

‘ Now, sir, of elde ye repreve me;
And certes, sir, though noon auctorite
Were in no book, ye gentils of honour
Sayn that men schuld an old wight doon favour;
And clepe him fader, for your gentillesse;
And auctours I schal fynden, as I gesse.

‘ Now ther that ye sayn I am foul and old,
Than drede you nought to ben a cokewold.
For filthe and elde,³ al so mot I the,
Ben grete wardeyns upon chastite.
But natheles, sith I knowe your delyt,
I schal fulfille youre worldly appetyt.

¹ *Sat. x. 22.*

² These sophisticated common-places, which never convinced any one, are taken, as Tyrwhitt says, from Vincent of Beauvais, *Spec. Hist.*, lib. x. c. 71.

³ This is, perhaps, the reason of the strange predilection for filth observable in many of the saints and hermits, even of the early church. In Terence's *Heautontimorumenos*. Syrus, wishing to prove Antiphila's chastity, thus describes her *ménage*—

‘ Una ancillula
Erat; ea texebat unà, pannis obsita,
Neglecta, immunda illuvie.’—Act ii. 20. 2.

Chese, now,' quod sche, 'oon of these thinges
tweye,

To have me foul and old til that I deye,

And be to yow a trewe humble wyf,

And never yow displease in al my lyf ;

Or elles ye wol have me yong and fair,

And take your aventure of the repair¹

That schal be to your hous bycause of me,

Or in som other place it may wel be.

Now chese yourselven whethir that yow liketh.'

This knight avysith him, and sore sikith,

But atte last he sayd in this manere :

' My lady and my love, and wyf so deere,

I putte me in your wyse governaunce,

Chesith yourself which may be most pleasaunce

And most honour to yow and me also,

I do no fors the whether of the tuo ,

For as yow likith, it suffisith me.'

' Than have I gete of yow the maystry,' quod sche,

' Sith I may govern and chese as me list ?

' Ye certis, wyf,' quod he, ' I hold it best.'

' Kys me,' quod sche, ' we ben no lenger wrothe,

For, by my trouthe, I wol be to yow bothe,

This is to say, ye, bothe fair and good.

I pray to God that I mot sterve wood ;

But I be to yow al so good and trewe

As ever was wyf, siththen the world was newe ;

And but I be to morow as fair to seen

Ay eny lady, emperesse, or queen,

That is bitwixe thest and eek the west,

Doth by my lyf right even as yow lest.²

Cast up the cortyns, and look what this is.'

And whan the knyght saugh verrayly al this,

¹ That is, Take your chance for the number of men who may resort to your house to pay their addresses to me.

² The second Cambridge MS. reads, instead of this line :—

' And so they slept till the morwe gray :

And than she saide, when it was day,

' Caste up the curteyn, loke howe it is.'

That sche so fair was, and so yong therto,
 For joye he hent hir in his armes tuo ;
 His herte bathid in a bath of blisse,
 A thousand tyme on rowe he gan hir kisse.
 And sche obeyed him in every thing
 That mighte doon him pleisauns er likyng.
 And thus thay lyve unto her lyves end
 In parfyt joye ; and Jhesu Crist us sende
 Housbondes meke, yonge, and freissche on bedde,
 And grace to overbyde hem that we wedde.
 And eek I pray to Jhesus schort her lyves,
 That wil nought be governed after her wyves.
 And old and angry nygardes of despense,
 God send hem sone verray pestilence !

THE PROLOGE OF THE FRERE.

THIS worthy lymytour, this noble Frere,
 He made alway a maner lourynge cheere
 Upon the Sompnour, but for honeste
 No vileyn's worde yit to him spak he.
 But atte last he sayd unto the wyf,
 ' Dame,' quod he, ' God give yow good lyf !
 Ye han her touchid, al so mot I the,
 In scole matier gret difficulte.
 Ye han sayd mochel thing right wel, I say ;
 But dame, right as we ryden by the way,
 Us needeth nought but for to speke of game,
 And lete auctorites,¹ in Goddes name,
 To preching and to scoles of clergie.
 But if it like to this companye,
 I wil yow of a sompnour telle a game ;
 Parde, ye may wel knowe by the name,

¹ *Auctoritas* means the text, and *expositio auctoritatis*, the comment. It is applied not only to Scripture, but to any authority, as we still use the word. Thus Jehan de Vignay, in his introduction to the French translation of the *Legenda Aurea*, says, Monseigneur Saint Hierosme me dit ceste auctorite.

That of a sompnour may no good be sayd ;
 I pray that noon of yow be evel apayd ;
 A sompnour is a renner up and doun
 With maundementz for fornicacioun,¹
 And is y-bete at every tounes eende.'

Our oste spak, 'A ! sir, ye schold been heende,
 And curteys, as a man of your estaat,
 In company we wol have no debaat ;
 Telleth your tale, and let the Sompnour be.'
 'Nay,' quoth the Sompnour, 'let him say to me
 What so him list ; whan it cometh to my lot,
 By God ! I schal him quyten every grot.
 I schal him telle which a gret honour
 Is to ben a fals flateryng lymytour.²
 And his offis I schal him telle I wis.'
 Oure host answerd, 'Pees, no more of this.'³
 And after this he sayd unto the Frere,
 'Telleth forth your tale, my leve⁴ maister deere.'

THE FRERES TALE.

[THIS tale was probably translated, as Mr. Wright conjectures, from some old fabliau, which also furnished the groundwork of the short tale entitled *De Advocato et Diabolo*, published by the Percy Society in a collection of Latin Stories, edited by Mr. Wright. Another version of the story, still closer to Chaucer's tale, has since been discovered in the British Museum (MS.

¹ Citations, or summonses, addressed to those accused of breaches of the canons, to appear and answer in the Archdeacon's court. The officer charged with the duty of serving these was no doubt often visited with the same summary punishment which is said to have been often inflicted on sheriffs' officers in Ireland in the last century. The sompnour, as his name implies, was the summoner, or server of summonses, answering to our modern apparitor

² It is strange that St. Francis and St. Dominic should not have foreseen that their rule, requiring the friars to obtain their livelihood by begging from house to house, would necessarily impair their independence of mind, and habituate them to the arts of flattery.

³ Harl. MS., and said the sompnour this.

⁴ Harl. MS., leve is omitted.

Cotton. *Cleopatra*, D. viii., fol. 110), and published by Mr. Wright in the *Archæologia*, vol. xxxii.]

WHILOM there was dwellyng in my countre
 An erchedeken, a man of gret degre,
 That boldely did execucioun,
 In punyschyng of fornicacioun,
 Of wicchecraft, and eek of bauderye,
 Of diffamacioun, and avoutrie,
 Of chirche-reves, and of testaments,
 Of contractes, and of lak of sacraments,¹
 And eek of many another maner cryme,
 Which needith not to reherse at this tyme;

¹ 'Lak of sacraments' means the neglect of the Church's precept to communicate at Easter, to which sacramental confession was, in the mediæval Church, practically, though not theoretically, a necessary preliminary.

The system of ecclesiastical discipline upon which this tale is founded requires some further explanation.

In the Church of the first three centuries ecclesiastical censures had the effect of depriving the offender of spiritual privileges only.—See BINGHAM'S *Antiquities*, &c., 16, 2, 3. But when the empire became Christian, under Constantine and his successors, a new principle was gradually introduced. It was thought that the State was bound to add its *temporal* to the Church's *spiritual* sanctions; and the contumacious or excommunicated person was coerced by civil disabilities. After the destruction of the Roman Empire, the same legal principle was adopted by the several states of Christendom founded upon its ruins, and therefore forms an important part of mediæval jurisprudence. See a very apposite illustration of this in the first part of DE JOINVILLE'S *Memoirs of Louis IX.*, near the end.

At the Reformation, the several reformed communities adopted the same principle. The Calvinists, or Presbyterians, at Geneva, in Scotland, and in England during their short term of power, were especially zealous in enforcing it.—See Preface to HOOKER'S *Eccles. Pol.*

The canons of the Church of England, passed in 1604, which still in many respects regulate the practice of the English Ecclesiastical Courts, bear witness to the system as enforced in the reigns of the Tudors and Stuarts.—See particularly Canons 2, 65, and 112, in which the *Questman* seems to have performed many of the duties of Chaucer's *sompnour*. These have now become obsolete, partly from being inconsistent with recent statutes, and partly by the tacit consent of all parties.

Most of the communities of non-conformists, however, maintain a principle of discipline similar to that of the Ante-Nicene Church, their 'reading out of meeting' being exactly equivalent to the excommunication of the early ages of Christianity.

Of usur, and of symony also ;
 But certes lecchours did he grettest woo ;
 Thay schulde synge, if that they were hent ;
 And smale tythers thay were fouly schent,
 If eny persoun wold upon hem pleyne,
 Ther might astert him no pecunial peyne.
 For smale tythes and for smal offrynge,¹
 He made the poeple pitously to synge.
 For er the bisschop caught hem in his hook,²
 They weren in the archedeknes book :³
 And hadde thurgh his jurediccoun
 Power to have of hem correccioun.
 He had a sompnour redy to his hond,
 A slyer boy was noon in Engelond ;
 Ful prively he had his espiaile,
 That taughte him wher he might avayle.
 He couthe spare of lecchours oon or tuo,
 To techen him to four and twenty mo.
 For though this sompnour wood were as an hare,
 To telle his harlotry I wol not spare ;
 For we ben out of here correccioun,
 They have of us no jurediccoun,⁴

¹ The neglect to pay tithes and Easter offerings came under the archdeacon's jurisdiction, as the bishop's diocesan officer. The friar does not scruple to make an invidious use of this subject at the expense of the parochial clergy, because, being obliged by his rule to gain his livelihood by begging, he had no interest in tithes.

² An allusion to the bishop's pastoral staff, which was in the shape of a sheep-hook. Its form and symbolical meaning are thus described in the *Vision of Piers Plowman*:—

‘ Dobest is above bothe,
 And berith a bischopis ‘crois,’
 And is *hokid* on that on end
 To halie men fro helle,
 And a pike is in the poynt
 To put adon the wyked.’

³ Offenders were, in the first instance, summoned before the archdeacon, and afterwards, if found incorrigible, transferred to the bishop, who alone had the power of inflicting the greater excommunication.

⁴ The religious orders, but particularly the mendicants or friars, were, by special dispensation of the pope, exempt from the bishop's jurisdiction, and placed under that of their general or superior only, with, of course, an appeal to the supreme pontiff. This was a fertile subject of

Ne never schul to terme of alle her lyves.
 'Peter! so been the wommen of the styves,'¹
 Quod this Sompnour, 'i-put out of onre cures.'
 'Pees! with meschaunce and with mesaventures,'
 Thus sayd our host, 'and let him telle his tale.
 Now telleth forth, although the Sompnour gale,
 Ne spareth nought, myn owne maister deere.'
 This false thief, the sompnour, quoth the frere,
 Had alway bawdes redy to his hond,
 As eny hauk to lure in Engelond,²
 That told him al the secre that thay knewe,
 For here acquaintance was not come of newe;
 Thay were his approwours prively.
 He took himself a gret profyt therby;
 His maister knew nat alway what he wan.
 Withoute maundement, a lewed man
 He couthe sompne, up peyne of Cristes curs,
 And thay were glad to fille wel his purs,
 And make him grete festis atte nale.
 And right as Judas³ hadde purses smale
 And was a thief, right such a thief was he,
 His maister had not half his duete;
 He was (if I schal give him his laude)
 A thief, a sompnour, and eek a bande.
 And he had wenches at his retenue,
 That whethir that sir Robert or sir Hughe,⁴

jealousy between the several rival orders, and between them all and the parochial clergy, of which the antipathy shown by the friar and sompnour to each other is an example. So 'Jack Upland' asks the friar. 'Why be ye not under your bishop's visitation, and liegemen to our king?' The chronicles of the middle ages, especially that of *Richard of Devizes*, are filled with their mutual reproaches.

¹ The sompnour's repartee is founded upon the law by which houses of ill-fame were exempted from ecclesiastical interference, and licensed, on the principle that they were a necessary evil, and might thus be kept under better surveillance. Harl. MS. reads, *They beth i-put al out*, &c.

² See *ante*, p. 223, note 1.

³ Mr. Wright says, 'According to the mediæval legends, Judas was Christ's purse-bearer, and embezzled a part of the money which was given to him by his master.' These 'mediæval legends' are obviously drawn from the gospel of St. John, xii. 6.

⁴ These are common names for secular clergymen. They are called

Or Jak, or Rauf, or who so that it were,
 That lay by hem, thay told it in his eere.
 Thus was the wenche and he of oon assent.
 And he wold fecche a feyned maundement,
 And sompne hem to chapitre bothe tuo,
 And pyle the man, and let the wenche go.
 Than wold he sayn, 'I schal, frend, for thy sake,
 Don strike the out of oure lettres blake;
 The thar no more as in this cas travayle;
 I am thy frend ther I the may avayle.'
 Certeynly he knew of bribours mo
 Than possible is to telle in yeres tuo;
 For in this world nys dogge for the bowe,¹
 That can an hurt deer from an hol y-knowe,
 Bet than this sompnour knew a leccheour,
 Or avoutier, or ellis a paramour;
 And for that was the fruyt of al his rent,
 Therefore theron he set al his entent.

And so bifel, that oones on a day
 This sompnour, ever wayting on his pray,
 Rod forth to sompne a widew, an old ribibe,²
 Feynyng a cause, for he wolde han a³ bribe.
 And happed that he say bifore him ryde
 A gay yeman under a forest syde;
 A bow he bar, and arwes bright and kene,
 He had upon a courtepy of grene,
 An hat upon his heed, with frenges blake.
 'Sir,' quod this sompnour, 'heyl and wel overtake!'

sir, not by virtue of their priestly office, but of their degree of B.A. at the university; though perhaps the title may afterwards have been given to all priests by courtesy.

¹ A dog trained for shooting with the bow, part of whose education consisted in following the stricken deer only, and separating it from the herd.

² See *ant*, p. 198, note 2. *Ribibe* is here put metaphorically for an old woman, perhaps, as Tyrwhitt supposes, from its shrillness.

³ Harl. MS. omits *han a*.—W.

'Welcome,' quod he, 'and every good felawe:

Whider ridestow under this grene schawe?"

Sayde this yiman, 'Wiltow fer to day?"

This sompnour answerd, and sayde, 'Nay.

Her faste by,' quod he, 'is myn entent

To ryden, for to reysen up a rent,

That longith to my lordes duete.'

'Artow than a bayely?' 'Ye,'¹ quod he.

He durste not for verray filth and schame

Sayn that he was a sompnour, for the name."

'*De par dieux!*' quod the yeman, 'lieve brother,

Thou art a bayly, and I am another.

I am unknowen, as in this contre;

Of thin acqueintance I wol praye the,

And eek of brotherheed, if it yow lest.

I have gold and silver in my chest;

If that the happe come into oure schire,

Al schal be thin, right as thou wolt desire.'

'*Graunt mercy,*' quod this sompnour, 'by my faith!"

Everich in otheres hond his trouthe laith,

For to be sworne bretheren³ til thay deyen.

In daliaunce forth thay ride and pleyen.

This sompnour, which that was as ful of jangles,

As ful of venym ben these weryangles,⁴

And ever enqueriing upon every thing,

'Brother,' quod he, 'wher now is your dwellyng,

Another day if that I schuld yow seeche?"

This yiman him answered in softe speche:

'Brother,' quod he, 'fer in the north contre,'⁵

Wheras I hope somtyme I schal the se.

¹ Harl. MS. omits *ye*.

² The friar says, the very name of sompnour bore such a note of infamy that he was ashamed to own it.

³ See *ante*, p. 124. note 1.

⁴ Apparently, from Speght's note, the shrike, or butcher bird, which is very clamorous, and feeds upon small birds, sticking them on a thorn, and so tearing them to pieces.

⁵ The hell of the Teutonic race, before they were Christians, was in the north; and after their conversion, as their converters adopted

Er we depart I schal the so wel wisse,
 That of myn hous ne schaltow never misse.
 'Now, brother,' quod this sompnour, 'I yow pray,
 Teche me, whil that we ryden by the way,
 Syn that ye ben a baily as am I,
 Som subtilte as tel me faithfully
 In myn office how that I may wyne.
 And spare not for consciens or for synne,
 But, as my brother, tel me how do ye.'

'Now, by my trouthe, brothir myn,' sayd he,
 'As I schal telle the a faithful tale.
 My wages ben ful streyt and eek ful smale;
 My lord to me is hard¹ and daungerous,
 And myn office is ful laborous;
 And therfor by extorcious I lyve,
 Forsoth I take al that men wil me give,
 Algate by sleighte or by violence
 Fro yer to yer I wynne my despence;
 I can no better telle faithfully.'

'Now certes,' quod this sompnour, 'so fare I;
 I spare not to take, God it woot,
 But if it be to hevy or to hoot.²
 What I may gete in counseil prively,
 No more consciens of that have I.
 Nere myn extorcions,³ I might not lyven,
 Ne of such japes I wil not be schriven.
 Stomak ne conscience know I noon;
 I schrew thes schrifte-fadres everychoon.
 Wel be we met, by God and seint Jame!
 But, leve brother, telle me thy name,
 Quod this sompnour. In this mene while
 This yeman gan a litel for to smyle.

their name, only giving the place a Christian character, it was natural that the people should retain their original notion of its position.

¹ Harl. MS., *streyt*.

² Tyrwhitt quotes the same expression, from Froissart: *ne laissoient rien à prendre, s'il n'étoit trop chaud, trop froid, ou trop pesant.*

³ That is, 'Were it not for my extortions.'

'Brothir,' quod he, 'woltow that I the telle?
 I am a feend, my dwellyng is in helle,
 And her I ryde about my purchasyng,
 To wite wher men wol give me eny thing.
 My purchas is theeffect of al my rent.¹
 Loke how thou ridest for the same entent
 'To wynne good, thou rekkist never how,
 Right so fare I, for ryde I wolde now
 Unto the worldes ende for a pray.'

'A!' quod the sompnour, '*benedicite*,² what ye say?
 I wende ye were a yeman trewely.
 Ye han a mannes schap as wel as I,
 Have ye a figure than determinate³
 In helle, ther ye ben in your estate?'
 'Nay, certeynly,' quod he, 'ther have we non,
 But whan us likith we can take us on,
 Or ellis make yow seme that we ben schape
 Som tyme like a man, or like an ape;
 Or lik an aungel⁴ can I ryde or go;
 It is no wonder thing though it be so
 A lousy jogelour⁵ can decyve the.
 And, parfay, yit can I more craft than he.'

'Why,' quod this sompnour, 'ryde ye than or goon
 In sondry wyse, and nought alway in oon?'

¹ My whole income is derived from what I can obtain by my trade.

² *Benedicite* in this and other places seems to have been colloquially contracted somehow thus: *Ben'cite*, as *God be with you* is contracted *good bye*.

³ The friar represents the sompnour as glad of an opportunity of gaining information from a spiritual being like Satan on those metaphysical questions so eagerly discussed in the middle ages, especially by the mendicant orders which produced men of unrivalled subtlety of the reasoning power. Thomas Aquinas was a Dominican, Duns Scotus a Franciscan friar.

⁴ 2 Cor. xi. 14.

⁵ The minstrels were called also *jogelours*, and united with their musical entertainments the arts of legerdemain. Thus the minstrel Taillefer accompanied his song of Roland at the battle of Hastings with tricks of dexterity, which the beholders attributed to enchantment. Merlin and Thomas of Erceidoun are examples of this strange conjunction of characters.

'For,' quod he, 'we wol us in such forme make,
 As most abil¹ is oure pray to take.'
 'What makith yow to have al this labour?'
 'Ful many a cause, lieve sir sompnour,'
 Sayde this feend. 'But al thing hath a tyme;
 The day is schort, and it is passed prime,
 And yit ne wan I nothing in this day;
 I wol entent to wynnyng, if I may,
 And not entende oure thinges to declare;
 For, brother myn, thy wit is al to bare
 To understond, although I told hem the.
 For but thou axid whi laboure we;
 For som tyme we ben Goddis instrumentes,
 And menes to don his comaundementes,
 Whan that him list, upon his creatures,
 In divers act and in divers figures.
 Withouten him we have no might certeyn,
 If that him liste stonde ther agayn.
 And som tyme at our prayer have we leeve,
 Only the body, and not the soule greve;²
 Witness on Jobe, whom we dide ful wo.
 And som tyme have we might on bothe tuo,
 This is to say of body and soule eeke.
 And som tyme be we suffred for to seeke
 Upon a man, and doon his soule unrest
 And not his body, and al is for the best.
 Whan he withstondith oure temptacioun,
 It is a cause of his savacioun,
 Al be it so it was nought oure entent
 He schuld be sauf, but that we wold him hent.
 And som tyme we ben servaunt unto man,
 As to therchebisschop seynt Dunstan,³
 And to thapostolis, servaunt was I.'⁴
 'Yit tel me,' quod the sompnour, 'faithfully,

¹ *Abil* is a French word (*habile*, handy, dexterous), and is, therefore, accented on the last syllable.

² Job ii. 6.

³ St. Dunstan is said to have reduced the fiend to obedience when he came to tempt him as he was working in his forge.

⁴ Perhaps an allusion to Acts xix. 14.

Make ye yow newe bodies alway
 Of elementz?' The fend answerde, 'Nay;
 Som tyme we feyne, and som tyme we ryse
 With dede bodies,¹ in ful wonder wyse,
 And speke renably, and as fair and wel
 As to the Phitonissa dede Samuel;²
 And yit wol somme say, it was not he.
 I do no fors of your divinite.
 But oon thing warne I the, I wol not jape,
 Thou wilt algates wite how we ben schape:
 Thow schalt hereafter-ward. my brother deere,
 Com, wher the nedith nothing for to leere,
 For thou schalt by thin oughn experience
 Coune in a chayer³ reden of this sentence
 Bet than Virgile,⁴ whils he was on lyve,
 Or Daunt also. Now let us ryde blyve,
 For I wol holde company with the,
 Til it be so that thou forsake me.'
 'Nay,' quod the sompnour, 'that schal nought betyde.
 I am a yiman that knowen is ful wyde;
 My trouthe wol I holde, as in this caas.
 For though thou be the devyl Sathanas,

¹ The prevailing belief that the Evil Spirit sometimes appeared in the form of the departed is illustrated by *Hamlet's* doubts respecting his father's appearance, act ii. scene 2 :—

'The spirit that I have seen
 May be a devil; and the devil hath power
 To assume a pleasing shape.'

² It was generally believed by theologians that the Witch of Endor could not really recal Samuel from the grave, but that the Evil Spirit appeared in his form, in order to give credit to the idolatry and witchcraft by which Saul and the Israelites were seduced from the worship of the true God. She is here called *Phitonissa*, because *Python*, or *Apollo*, was the God of Prophecy. Thus, in the Acts, xvi. 16, the words translated in our version—a spirit of *Divination*, are, in the original, πνεῦμα Πύθωνος.

³ That is, you shall hereafter understand this subject so well that you will be competent to give lectures on it, as a professor in his chair.

⁴ Alluding to the visit of Æneas to the infernal regions, in the sixth book of the *Æneid*, and to Dante's *Inferno*.

My trouthe wol I holde to the, my brother,
 As I am swore, and ech of us to other,
 For to be trewe bretheren in this caas;
 For bothe we goon abouten oure purchas.
 Tak thou thi part, and that men wil the gyven,
 And I schal myn, thus may we bothe lyven.
 And if eny of us have more than other,
 Let him be trewe, and part it with his brother.'
 'I graunte,' quod the devel, 'by my fay!'
 And with that word thay riden forth her way;
 And right at thentryng of a townes ende,
 To which this sompnour schope him for to wende,
 Thay seigh a cart, that chargid was with hay,
 Which that a carter drof forth in his way.
 Deep was the way, for which the carte stood;
 This carter smoot, and cryde as he wer wood,
 'Hayt, brok; hayt, scot;¹ what spare ye for the
 stoones?
 The fend,' quod he, 'yow fech body and bones,
 As ferforthly as ever wer ye folid!
 So moche wo as I have with yow tholid!
 The devyl have al, bothe cart and hors and hay!'
 This sompnour sayde, 'Her schal we se play.'
 And ner the feend he drough, as nought ne were,
 Ful prively, and rouned in his eere,
 'Herke, my brother, harke, by thi faith!
 Ne herest nought thou what the carter saith?
 Hent it anoon, for he hath given it the,
 Bothe hay and caples, and eek his cart, parde!'
 'Nay,' quod the devyl, 'God wot, never a del,
 It is nought his entente, trustith wel,
 Ask it thiself, if thou not trowist me,
 Or ellis stint a while and thou schalt se.'

¹ *Hayt* is still the word used by waggoners in Norfolk to make their horses go on. *Brok* (brock) means a badger; hence applied to a grey horse, afterwards called by the carter 'myn oughne *lyard* (grey) boy! *Scot* is a common name for farm horses in East Anglia. The *Reeve's* horse (see *Prologe*) is called *Scot*. The Harl. MS. reads *stot* (stallion); but *Scot* (adopted from Tyrwhitt), being a proper name, seems the true reading.

This carter thakketh his hors upon the croupe,
 And thay bygon to drawen and to stowpe.
 'Hayt now,' quod he, 'ther Jhesu Crist yow blesse,
 And al his hondwerk, bothe more and lesse!
 That was wel twight, myn oughne lyard boy,
 I pray God save thy body and seint Loy!¹
 Now is my cart out of the sloo parde!
 'Lo! brother,' quod the feend, 'what told I the?
 Her may ye seen, myn owne deere brother,
 The carter spak oon thing, and thought another.
 Let us go forth abouten our viage;
 Hier wynne I nothing upon cariage.'

Whan that thay comen somewhat out of toune,
 This sompnour to his brothir gan to rounne.
 'Brothir,' quod he, 'her wonyth an old rebekke,
 That had almost as lief to leese hir necke,
 As for to give a peny of hir good.
 I wol han twelf pens² though that sche go wood,
 Or I wol somone hir to oure office;
 And yit, God wot, I know of hir no vice.
 But for thou canst not, as in this contre,
 Wynne thy cost, tak her ensample of me.'
 This sompnour clapped at the widowes gate;
 'Com out,' quod he, 'thou olde viritrate;
 I trowe thou hast som frere or prest with the.'
 'Who clappith ther?' sayd this widow, '*benedicite*
 God save yow, sir! what is your swete wille?'
 'I have,' quod he, 'a somonaunce of a bille,

¹ Thus the *Book of Homilies*, in enumerating the different forms of invoking the saints, gives, as an example, 'to the horse, God and Saint Loy save thee.' This is probably a contraction for Eligius, who was originally a worker in metals. [St. Loy, Eloy, or Eligius, was, in fact, the patron saint of smiths. Chambers, *Book of Days*, ii. 389.—W. W. S.]

² Harl. MS., by a curious contraction, reads *wolf*, for *wol han twelf*.—W. The value of the twelve pence for which the sompnour sued the widow may be estimated by the relative prices of food and labour. For twelve pence the widow might have purchased two dozen of hens, or three gallons of red wine, or hired a dozen common labourers for twelve days. See vol. i., p. 33, note 1.

Up payne of cursyng,¹ loke that thou be
 To morwe biforn our erchedeknes kne,
 To answer to the court of certeyn thinges.
 'Now,' quod sche, 'Jhesu Crist, and king of kinges,
 So wisly helpe me, as I ne may.
 I have ben seek, and that ful many a day.
 I may not goon so fer,' quod sche, 'ne ryde,
 But I be deed, so prikiþ it in my syde.
 May I nat aske a lybel,² sir sompnour,
 And answer ther by my procuratour
 To suche thing as men wol oppose me?'
 'Yis,' quod this sompnour, 'pay anon, let se,
 Twelf pens³ to me, and I the wil acquite.
 I schal no profyt have therby but lite;
 My mayster hath the profyt and not I.
 Com of, and let me ryden hastily;
 Gif me my twelf pens, I may no lenger tary.'
 'Twelf pens?' quod sche, 'now lady seinte Mary
 So wysly help me out of care and synne,
 This wyde world though that I schulde wynne,
 Ne have I not twelf pens withinne myn hold.
 Ye knowen wel that I am pore and old;
 Kithe youre almes on me pore wrecche.'
 'Nay than,' quod he, 'the foule fend me fecche!
 If I thexcuse, though thou schalt be spilt.'
 'Allas!' quod sche, 'God wot, I have no gilt.'
 'Pay me,' quod he, 'or by the swet seint Anne!
 As I wol bere away thy newe panne
 For dette, which thou owest me of old,
 Whan that thou madest thin housbond cokewold,
 I payd at hom for thy correccioun.'
 'Thou lixt,' quod sche, 'by my savacioun,
 Ne was I never er now, wydow ne wyf,
 Somound unto your court in al my lyf;

¹ On pain of excommunication.

² A copy of the information or indictment. A libel is still the expression in the ecclesiastical courts.

³ See *ante*, p. 361, note 2.

Ne never I was but of my body trewe.
 Unto the devel rough and blak of hiewe
 Give I thy body and the panne also!
 And whan the devyl herd hir curse so
 Upon hir knees, he sayd in this manere:
 'Now, Mabely, myn owne modir deere,
 Is this your wil in ernest that ye seye?'
 'The devel,' quod sche, 'fecche him er he deye,
 And panne and al, but he wol him repente!'

'Nay, olde stot, that is not myn entente,'
 Quod this sompnour, 'for to repente me
 For eny thing that I have had of the;
 I wold I had thy smok and every cloth.'
 'Now brothir,' quod the devyl, 'be not wroth;
 Thy body and this panne is myn by right.¹
 Thow schalt with me to helle yit to night,
 Wher thou schalt knowen of our privete
 More than a maister of divinite.'

And with that word the foule fend him hente;
 Body and soule, he with the devyl wente,
 Wher as the sompnours han her heritage;
 And God that maked after his ymage
 Mankynde, save and gyde us alle and some,
 And leeve this sompnour good man to bycome.

'Lordyngs, I couth han told yow,' quod the frere,
 'Had I had leysir for this sompnour here,
 After the text of Crist, and Powel, and Jon,
 And of oure other doctours many oon,
 Such peynes that our herte might agrise,
 Al be it so, no tonge may devyse,
 Though that I might a thousand wynter telle,
 The peyn of thilke cursed hous of helle.
 But for to kepe us from that cursed place,
 Wakith, and prayeth Jhesu for his grace,

¹ The widow's curse, being uttered from her heart, gives the Devil a right to carry away the sompnour. This condition, which agrees exactly with the Latin story published by Mr. Wright in the *Archæologia*, did not apply to the curse of the carter, who 'spak oon thing, and thought another.'

So kepe us fro the temptour Sathanas.
 Herknith this word, beth war as in this cas.
 The lyoun syt in his awayt alway¹
 To slen the innocent, if that he may.
 Disposith youre hertes to withstonde
 The fend, that wolde make yow thral and bonde;
 He may not tempte yow over your might,²
 For Crist wol be your champioun and knight;
 And prayeth, that oure Sompnour him repente
 Of his mysdede, er that the fend him hente.'

THE SOMPNOURES PROLOGE.

THIS Sompnour in his styrop up he stood,
 Upon the Frere his herte was so wood,
 That lyk an aspen leef he quok for ire.
 'Lordyngs,' quod he, 'but oon thing I desire;
 I yow biseke, that of your curtesye,
 Syn ye han herd this false Frere lye,
 As suffrith me I may my tale telle.
 This Frere bosteth that he knowith helle,
 And, God it wot, that is litil wonder,
 Freres and feendes been but litel asonder.
 For, pardy, ye han often tyme herd telle,
 How that a frere ravyscht was to helle³
 In spirit ones by a visioun,
 And as an aungel lad him up and doun,
 To schewen him the peynes that ther were,
 In al the place saugh he not a frere,
 Of other folk he saugh y-nowe in wo.
 Unto this aungel spak this frere tho:

¹ Psalm x. 9.

² 1 Cor. x. 13.

³ A favourite mode of awakening the careless in the middle ages. Bede relates a story of a monk thus favoured with a glimpse of the other world, upon whom it made such an impression that he never after was seen to smile. The idea is probably derived from the descent, in the *Odyssey* and *Æneid*, of Ulysses and Æneas into the infernal regions.

'Now, sire,' quod he, 'han freres such a grace,
 That noon of hem schal comen in this place?'
 'Yis,' quod this aungil, 'many a mylioun.'
 And unto Sathanas he lad him down.
 'And now hath Sathanas,' saith he, 'a tayl
 Broder than of a carrik is the sayl.'
 'Hold up thy tayl, thou Sathanas,' quod he,
 'Schew forth thyn ers, and let the frere se
 Wher is the nest of freres in this place.'
 And er than half a forlong way of space,
 Right so as bees swarmen out of an hyve,
 Out of the develes ers thay gonne dryve,
 Twenty thousand freres on a route,
 And thoroughout helle swarmed al aboute,
 And comen agen, as fast as thay may goon,
 And in his ers thay crepen everichoon.
 He clappid his tayl agayn, and lay ful stille.
 This frere, whan he loked had his fille
 Upon the torment of this sory place,
 His spirit God restored of his grace
 Unto his body agayn, and he awook;
 But natheles for fere yit he quook,
 So was the develes ers yit in his mynde,
 That is his heritage of verray kynde.
 God save yow alle, save this cursed Frere;
 My proloug wol I ende in this manere.'

THE SOMPNOURES TALE.

LORDYNGS, ther is in Engeland, I gesse,
 A mersschly lond called Holderneshe,¹
 In which ther went a lymytour aboute
 To preche,² and eek to begge, it is no doubte.

¹ A district on the coast of Yorkshire.

² The object of St. Francis of Assissi and St. Dominic, the founders of the mendicant orders, was to supply the want of popular preaching and active zeal, to which the parochial and older monastic systems

And so bifel it on a day this frere
 Had preched at a chirch in this manere,
 And specially aboven ever thing
 Excited he the poepul in his preching
 To trentals,¹ and to give for Goddis sake,
 Wherwith men mighten holy houses make,
 Ther as divine servys is honoured,
 Nought ther as it is wasted and devoured;
 Neither it needeth not for to be give
 As to possessioneres,² that mow lyve,
 Thanked be God, in wele and abundaunce.
 'Trentals,' sayd he, 'delyvereth fro penaunce
 Her frendes soules, as wel eld as yonge,
 Ye, whanne that thay hastily ben songe,
 Nought for to hold a prest jolif and gay,
 He syngith not but oon masse in a day.
 Delyverith out,' quod he, 'anoon³ the soules.
 Ful hard it is, with fleischhok or with oules
 To ben y-clawed, or brend, or i-bake;⁴
 Now speed yow hastily for Cristes sake.'

were not, as they supposed, practically conducive. They proposed to attain this object by raising up a class of men who should be unshackled by worldly possessions or hopes of preferment, and who, by their education, should be enabled to satisfy the awakening thirst for knowledge among the people. The friars, therefore, as indicated in the text, were the popular preachers of the middle ages; and there can be no doubt that the general diffusion of a knowledge of Scripture, and the discussion of religious subjects by the lower classes, to which their preachings gave rise, prepared the popular mind for forming a decision respecting those metaphysical questions upon which the Reformation was ostensibly founded.

¹ Thirty masses celebrated for the benefit of souls in purgatory.

² The friar invidiously calls the monks, who could possess property in common, and the parochial clergy, who of course possessed it as laymen did, *possessioners*. The friars, by their rule, were obliged to beg their bread, but so irrational a rule was, as might be expected, soon evaded.

³ Harl. MS. omits *anoon*.

⁴ The popular preachers and painters of the middle ages used to represent the punishments of sin as consisting of a literal tearing, burning, and freezing of the flesh, intending them to be understood metaphorically; but the unlearned of course applied these representations in a literal sense. In Albert Dürer's 'Der Kleine Passion' is a very curious example.

And whan this frere had sayd al his entent,
 With *qui cum patre*,¹ forth his way he went.
 Whan folk in chirch had give him what hem lest,
 He went his way, no lenger wold he rest,
 With scrip and pyked staf, y-touked hye;
 In every hous he gan to pore and pry,
 And beggyd mele or chese, or eilis corn.
 His felaw had a staf typped with horn,
 A payr of tablis al of yvory,²
 And a poyntel y-polischt fetisly,
 And wroot the names alway as he stood
 Of alle folk that gaf him eny good,
 Ascaunce that he wolde for hem preye.
 'Gif us a busshel whet, or malt, or reye,
 A Goddes kichil,³ or a trip of chese,
 Or elles what yow list, we may not chese;
 A Goddes halpeny, or a masse peny;⁴
 Or gif us of youre braune, if ye have eny,
 A dagoun of your blanket, leeve dame,
 Oure suster deer,—lo! her I write your name—
 Bacoun or beef, or such thing as we fynde.'
 A stourdy harlot ay went hem byhynde,

¹ This is part of the formula with which prayers and sermons are still sometimes concluded in the Church of England.

² Thus Jacke Upland asks the supposed friar, 'Why writest thou her names in thy tables that yeveth thee mony? sith God knoweth al thing: for it semeth by thy writing, that God would not reward hem; but thou writest in thy tables, God would els forgotten it.' The meaning of recording the names, however, was that they might be remembered in the prayers of the brotherhood.

³ Tyrwhitt, after showing the absurdity of Speght's interpretation of this expression, says that it is common in French, and that the meaning is explained by M. de la Monnoye, in a note upon the *Contes de B. D. Periers*, tom. ii., p. 107:—'Rien n'est plus commun dans la bouche des bonnes vieilles, que ces especes d'Hebraismes: 'Il m'en coûte un bel écu de Dieu; il ne me reste que ce pauvre enfant de Dieu; donnez-moi une benite aumône de Dieu.'

⁴ A *masse peny* is probably a penny for saying a mass. Thus, Jacke Upland:—'Freer, when thou receivest a penie for to say a masse, whether sellest thou God's bodie?' &c. He might as well have said that St. Paul sold the Gospel because he sometimes accepted pecuniary aid from his converts.

That was her hostis¹ man, and bar a sak,
 And what men gaf hem, layd it on his bak.
 And whan that he was out atte dore, anoon
 He planed out the names everychoon,
 That he biforn had writen in his tablis;
 He served hem with nyfles and with fablis. [Frere.

‘Nay, ther thou lixt,² thou Sompnour,’ sayd the
 ‘Pees,’ quod our host, ‘for Cristes moder deere,
 Tel forth thy tale, and spare it not at al.’

‘So thrive I,’ quod the Sompnour, ‘so I schal!’

So long he wente hous by hous, til he
 Cam til an hous, ther he was wont to be
 Refresshid mor than in an hundrid placis.
 Syk lay the housbond man, whos that the place is,
 Bedred upon a couche lowe he lay.

‘*Deus hic*,’³ quod he, ‘O Thomas, frend, good day!’
 Sayde this frere al curteysly and softe.

‘O Thomas, God yeld it yow, ful ofte
 Have I upon this bench i-fare ful wel,
 Her have I eten many a mery mel.’
 And fro the bench he drof away the cat,⁴
 And layd adoun his potent and his hat,
 And eek his scrip, and set him soft adoun;
 His felaw was go walkid in the toun
 Forth with his knave, into the ostelrye,
 Wher as he schop him thilke night to lye.

¹ In all religious houses there was an officer specially appointed to wait on the guests, called here the ‘hostisman,’ or guests’ man, *host*, like the Latin *hospes*, meaning both host and guest.

² The friar’s vehement denial is admirably managed. The general resemblance of the sompnour’s picture is so perfect, that even he is carried away by its spirit, and believes it real; but he thinks he can at least dispute the trifling circumstance of the blotting out of the names.

³ God be here, apparently a form of benediction. It is a common phrase amongst the peasantry in Ireland and Brittany to say, on entering a house, ‘God save all here.’

⁴ It is by this sort of by-play that Chaucer gives such a marvellous reality to his scenes. He does not say that the friar made himself quite at home, but he makes you see it with your eyes.

'O deere maister,' quod the seeke man,
'How have ye fare siththe March bygan?
I saygh yow nought this fourtenight or more.'

'God wot,' quod he, 'labord have I ful sore;
And specially for thy salvacioun
Have I sayd many a precious orisoun,
And for myn other frendes, God hem blesse.
I have to day ben at your chirche at messe,
And sayd a sermoun after my simple wit,
Nought al after the text of holy wryt.
For it is hard for yow, as I suppose,
And therfor wil I teche yow ay the glose.
Glosyng is a ful glorious thing certayn,
For letter sleth,¹ so as we clerkes sayn.
Ther have I taught hem to be charitable,
And spend her good ther it is resonable;
And ther I seigh our dame, wher is she?
'Yond in the yerd I trowe that sche be,'
Sayde this man, 'and sche wil come anoon.'

'Ey, mayster, welcome be ye, by seint Johan!
Sayde this wyf, 'how fare ye hertily?'

The frere ariseth up ful curteysly;
And her embracith² in his armes narwe,
And kist hir swete, and chirkeith as a sparwe
With his lippes: 'Dame,' quod he, 'right wel,
As he that is your servaunt everydel.
Thankyd be God, that yow gaf soule and lif,
Yit saugh I not this day so fair a wyf
In al the chirche, God so save me.'

'Ye, God amend defautes,³ sir,' quod sche,
'Algates welcome be ye, by my fay.'
'Graunt mercy, dame; this have I found alway.

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 6.

² Kissing was formerly the ordinary mode of salutation, as it still is in some parts of the continent.

³ A sort of modest *disqualifying* of herself, as much as to say, 'I know I have many faults, but may God amend them.'

But of your grete goodnes, by youre leve,
 I wolde pray yow that ye yow not greeve,
 I wil with Thomas speke a litel throwe;
 These curates¹ ben ful negligent and slowe
 To grope tendurly a conscience.

In schrift and preching² is my diligence,
 And study in Petres wordes and in Poules,
 I walk and fische³ Cristen mennes soules,
 To yelde Jhesu Crist his propre rent;
 To spreden his word is al myn entent.'

'Now, by your leve, o deere sir,' quod sche,
 'Chyd him right wel for seinte Trinite.'
 He is as angry as a pissemyre,
 Though that he have al that he can desire,
 Though I him wrye on night, and make him warme
 And over him lay my leg other myn arm,
 He groneth lik our boor, that lith in sty.
 Othir disport of him right noon have I,
 I may please him in no maner caas.'

'O Thomas, *jeo vous dy*, Thomas, Thomas,
 This makth the feend, this moste ben amendid.
 Ire is a thing that highe God defendid,
 And therof wold I speke a word or tuo.'

'Now, maister,' quod the wyf, 'er that I go,
 What wil ye dine? I will go therabout.'

'Now, dame,' quod he, '*jeo vous dy saunz doute*,
 Have I not of a capoun but the lyvere,
 And of your softe brede but a schivere,

¹ The secular or parochial clergy, who had *cure* (cura) of souls which the religious orders could not properly be said to have, because their jurisdiction was not confined to the ordinary limits, but extended, like that of a missionary, to whomsoever they could persuade.

² The friars, like the modern Jesuits, turned their attention particularly to the popular parts of theology, preaching, and the direction of consciences.

³ Luke v. 10.

⁴ *Saint* means properly *holy*, and so is applied to the Trinity, the Saviour, charity, &c., as well as to Christian men and women. *Sein* is the feminine form of the adjective, to agree with Trinite, a feminine noun in Latin and French.

And after that a rostyð pigges heed,
 (But that I wold for me no best were deed¹)
 Than had I with yow homly suffisaunce.
 I am a man of litel sustinaunce.
 My spirit hath his fostryng on the Bible.
 The body is ay so redy and so penyble
 To wake, that my stomak is destroyed.
 I pray yow, dame, that ye be not anoyed,
 For I so frendly yow my counseil schewe;
 By God! I nold not telle it but a fewe.
 'Now, sir,' quod sche, 'but o word er I go.
 My child is deed withinne this wykes tuo,
 Soon after that ye went out of this toun.'
 'His deth saugh I by revelacioun,'
 Sayde this frere, 'at hoom in oure dortour.
 I dar wel sayn, er that half an hour
 After his deth, I seigh him born to blisse
 In myn avysioun, so God me wisse.
 So did our sextein, and our fermerere,²
 That han ben trewe freres fifty yere;
 Thay may now, God be thanked of his lone,
 Maken her jubile,³ and walk alloone.
 And up I roos, and al our covent eeke,
 With many a teere trilling on my cheeke,
*Te Deum*⁴ was our song, and nothing ellis,
 Withouten noys or clateryng of bellis,

¹ This is perhaps in imitation of his founder, St. Francis, whose charity overflowed even upon the lower animals, whom he called his brothers and sisters, insomuch that he could not be prevailed upon to remove certain of them which found shelter in the folds of his ample hood.

² The officer who had charge of the farms or granges. In *Jacke Upland* is exposed the sophistry by which the friars endeavoured to reconcile the possession of farms with their 'rule.'

³ Peculiar honours and privileges were granted by the rule of St. Benedict to those monks who had lived fifty years in the order, and who were then said to have finished their jubilee. One of these privileges was that of walking alone, which, for obvious reasons, was forbidden to the other religious. So in *Jacke Upland*:—'What betokeneth that ye goe tweine and tweine together?'

⁴ Nothing but a thanksgiving would have been appropriate for a

Save that to Crist I sayd an orisoun,
 Thankyng him of my revelacioun.
 For, sire and dame, trustith me right wel,
 Our orisouns ben more effectuel,
 And more we se of Goddis secre thinges,
 Than borel folk, although that thay ben kinges.
 We lyve in povert and in abstinence,
 And borel folk in riches and dispence
 Of mete and drink, and in her ful delyt.
 We han all this worldes lust al in despyt.¹
 Lazar and Dives lyveden diversely,
 And divers guerdoun hadde thay thereby.
 Who so wol praye, he must faste,² and be clene,
 And fatte his soule, and make his body lene.
 We faren, as saith thapostil;³ cloth and foode
 Suffieeth us, though that thay ben not goode.
 The elennes and the fastyng of us freres
 Makith that Crist aacceptith oure prayeres.
 Lo, Moyses fourty dayes and fourty night
 Fasted,⁴ er that the highe God of might
 Spak with him in the mount of Synay;
 With empty wombe fastyng many a day,
 Receyved he the lawe, that was writen
 With Goddis fynger; and Eli,⁵ wel ye witen,
 In mount Oreb, er he had any speeche
 With highe God, that is oure lyves leche,
 He fastid, and was in contemplacioun.
 Aron, that had the temple in governacioun,
 And eek the other prestes⁶ everychoon,
 Into the temple whan thay schulden goon
 To preye for the poeple, and doon servise,
 Thay nolden drinken in no maner wise

child dying in infancy, of whose translation to paradise the friar also pretends that he had had a vision.

¹ Harl. MS. *delit*.

² Harl. MS. omits *he must*.

³ 1 Tim. vi. 8.

⁴ Exod. xxxiv. 28.

⁵ 1 Kings xix. 8.

⁶ Levit. x. 9

No drynke, which that dronke might hem make,
 But ther in abstinence prey and wake,
 Lest that thay dedin; tak heed what I say—
 But thay ben sobre¹ that for the pepul pray—
 War that I say—no mor; for it suffisith.
 Oure Lord Jhesu, as oure lore devysith,
 Gaf us ensampil of fastyng and prayeres;
 Therefore we mendinauntz, we sely freres,
 Ben wedded to povert and to continence,
 To charite, humblesse, and abstinence,
 To persecucioun for rightwisnesse,
 To wepyng, misericord, and clennessse.
 And therfor may ye seen that oure prayeres
 (I speke of us, we mendeaunts, we freres)
 Ben to the hihe God more acceptable
 Than youres, with your festis at your table.
 Fro Paradis first, if I schal not lye,
 Was man out chaced for his glotonye,
 And chast was man in Paradis certeyn.
 But now herk, Thomas, what I schal the seyn,
 I ne have no tixt of it, as I suppose,
 But I schal fynd it in a maner glose;
 That specially our swete Lord Jhesus
 Spak this by freres, whan he sayde thus,
 Blessed be thay that pover in spirit ben.²
 And so forth in the gospel ye may seen,
 Whether it be likir oure professioun,
 Or heris that swymmen in possessioun.
 Fy on her pomp, and on her glotenye,
 And on her lewydnesse! I hem defye.
 Me thinkith thay ben lik Jovynian,³
 Fat as a whal, and walken as a swan;
 Al vinolent as botel in the spence.⁴
 Her prayer is of ful gret reverence;

¹ An insinuation that the parochial clergy did not lead very sober lives.

² Matt. v. 3.

³ Probably the fabulous Emperor of Rome in one of the *Gesta Romanorum*.

⁴ As full of wine as a bottle in the cellar or buttery.

Whan thay for soules sayn the Psalm of David,
 Lo, boef thay say, *Cor meum eructavit*.¹
 Who folwith Cristes gospel and his lore
 But we, that humble ben, and chast, and pore,
 Workers of Goddes word, not auditours?²
 Therfor right as an hauk upon a sours³
 Upspringeth into thaer, right so prayeres
 Of charitabil and chaste busy freres
 Maken her sours to Goddis eeres tuo.
 Thomas, Thomas, so mote I ryde or go,
 And by that Lord that clepid is seint Ive,⁴
 Ner thou oure brother, schuldestow never thrive.
 In oure chapitre pray we day and night
 To Crist, that he the sende hele and might
 Thy body for to welden hastily.
 'God wot,' quod he, 'therof nought feele I,
 As help me Crist, as I in fewe yeeres
 Have spendid upon many divers freres
 Ful many a pound, yit fare I never the bet;
 Certeyn my good have I almost byset.
 Farwel my gold, for it is almost ago.'
 The frere answerd, 'O Thomas, dostow so?
 What needith yow dyverse freres seche?
 What needith him that hath a parfyt leche
 To sechen othir leches in the toun?
 Youre inconstance is youre confusioun.
 Holde ye than me, or elles oure covent,
 To praye for yow insufficient?
 Thomas, that jape is not worth a myte;
 Youre malady is for we have to lite.
 A! give that covent half a quarter otes;
 A! give that covent four and twenty grotes;

¹ The forty-fifth Psalm in the Vulgate begins *Eructavit cor meum*; and the pun is on the word *eructavit*. The priests are said to say 'for soules' because it is one of the psalms in the *Officium defunctorum*.

² James i. 22.

³ Like a falcon soaring, which she always does before swooping down upon her prey.

⁴ St. Ive was an exemplary priest of Lantriguier, in Bretagne.

A! give that frere a peny, and let him go;
 Nay, nay, Thomas, it may nought be so.
 What is a ferthing worth depart in tuelve?
 Lo, ech thing that is ooned in himselve
 Is more strong than whan it is to-skatrid.
 Thomas, of me thou schalt not ben y-flatrid,
 Thow woldist have our labour al for nought.
 The hihe God, that al this world hath wrought
 Saith, that the werkman is worthy of his hyre.¹
 Thomas, nought of your tresor I desire
 As for myself, but for that oure covent
 To pray for yow is ay so diligent;
 And for to buylden Cristes holy chirche.
 Thomas, if ye wil lerne for to wirche,
 Of buyldyng up on chirches may ye fynde
 If it be good, in Thomas lyf of Ynde.²
 Ye lye her ful of anger and of ire,
 With which the devel set your hert on fuyre,
 And chyden her the holy innocent
 Your wyf, that is so meke and pacient.
 And therfor trow me, Thomas, if thou list,
 Ne stryve nought with thy wyf, as for thi best.
 And ber this word away now by thy faith,
 Touchinge such thing, lo, the wise man saith,
 Withinne thin hous be thou no lyoun;³
 To thy subjects do noon oppressioun;
 Ne make thyn acqueyntis fro the fle.
 And yit, Thomas, eftsons I charge the,

¹ Luke x. 7.

² Ecclesiastical history says that the Apostle Thomas was the evangelist of the Indies, and recommended himself to a sovereign of that country by his skill in building. This is confirmed by the tradition preserved among the native Christians whom the early European settlers found in the country, and who are called the Christians of St. Thomas to this day; and also by the extraordinary similarity between some of the doctrines and forms of Hindooism and Buddhism and those of Christianity, which would lead one to suppose that the latter had at some time been received at least *in conjunction* with an old idolatry.

³ Eccclus. iv. 30.

Be war for ire that in thy bosom slepith.
 War for the serpent, that so slely crepith
 Under the gras, and styngith prively;
 Be war, my sone, and werk patiently,
 For twenty thousand men han lost her lyves
 For stryvyng with her lemmans and her wyves.
 Now syns ye han so holy and meeke a wif,
 What nedith yow, Thomas, to make strif?
 Ther nys, I wis, no serpent so cruel,
 When men trede on his tail, ne half so fel,
 As womman is, when sche hath caught an ire;
 Vengeans is thanne al that thay desire.
 Schortly may no man, by rym and vers,
 Tellen her thoughtes, thay ben so dyvers.
 Ire is a sinne, oon the grete of sevene,¹
 Abhominable to the God of hevene,
 And to himself it is destruccioun.
 This every lewed vicory or parsoun²
 Can say, how ire engendrith homicide;
 Ire is in soth executour of pride.
 I couthe of ire seyn so moche sorwe,
 My tale schulde laste til to morwe.
 Ire is the grate of synne, as saith the wise,³
 To fle therfro ech man schuld him devyse.
 And therfor pray I God bothe day and night,
 An irous man God send him litil might.
 It is greet harm, and also great pite,
 To set an irous man in high degre.

¹ One of the greatest of the seven deadly sins.

² The friar characteristically calls the parson and vicar *lewd*, that is, unlearned. The parson is properly the *parish priest*, or rector; the *vicar* a substitute appointed by the religious house to which the great tithes were sometimes granted, on condition that they provided for the cure of souls in the parish. At the dissolution of the abbeys, these great tithes were given, or played away at dice, to laymen by Henry VIII., and are now still held by laymen, who, like the old monasteries, give the small tithes to the vicar or substitute.

³ This apparently ought to be the *gate*, meaning flood-gate, of sin. The allusion will be to Prov. xvii. 14.

'Whilom ther was an irous potestate,
 As seith Senek,¹ that duryng his estaat
 Upon a day out riden knightes tuo;
 And, as fortune wolde right as it were so,
 That oon of hem cam home, that other nought.
 Anoon the knight bifore the juge is brought,
 That sayde thus, Thou hast thy felaw slayn,
 For which I deme the to deth certayn
 And to anothir knight comaundid he,
 Go, lede him to the deth, I charge the.
 And happed, as thay wente by the weye
 Toward the place ther he schulde deye,
 The knight com, which men wend hadde be deed.
 Than thoughten thay it were the beste reed
 To lede hem bothe to the juge agayn.
 Thay sayden, Lord, the knight hath not slayn
 His felaw; lo, heer he stont hool on lyve.
 Ye schal be deed, quod he, so mote I thrive!
 That is to sayn, bothe oon, tuo, and thre.
 And to the firste knyght right thus spak he;
 I deme the, thou most algate be deed.
 Than thoughte thay it were the beste rede,
 To lede him forth into a fair mede.
 And, quod the juge, also thou most lese thin heed,
 For thou art cause why thy felaw deyth.
 And to the thridde felaw thus he seith;
 Thou hast nought doon that I comaundid the.
 And thus he let don sle hem alle thre.
 Irous Cambises was eek dronkelewe,
 And ay delited him to ben a schrewe;
 And so bifel, a lord of his meigne,
 That loved vertues, and eek moralite,
 Sayd on a day bitwix hem tuo right thus,
 A lord is lost, if he be vicious;

¹ This and the following story of Cambyses are told by Seneca, *De Ira*, lib. i. c. xvi.—T.

An irous man is lik a frentik best,
 In which ther is of wisdom noon arrest;
 And dronkenes is eek a foul record
 Of any man, and namly of a lord.
 Ther is ful many an eyghe and many an eere
 Awaytand on a lord, and he not where.
 For Goddes love, drynk more attemperelly:
 Wyn makith man to lese wrecchedly
 His mynde, and eek his lymes everichoon.
 The revers schaltow seen, quod he, anoon,
 And prove it by thin owne experience,
 That wyn ne doth to folk non such offence.
 Ther is no won byreveth me my might
 Of hond, of foot, ne of myn eyghe sight.
 And for despyt he dronke moche more
 An hundrid part than he had doon byfore;
 And right anoon, this irous cursid wrecche
 Let this knightes sone anoon biforn him fecche,
 Comaundyng hem thay schuld biforn him stonde;
 And sodeinly he took his bowe on honde,
 And up the streng he pulled to his eere,
 And with an arwe he slough the child right there.
 Now whethir have I a sikur hond or noon?
 Quod he, Is al my mynde and might agoon?
 Hath wyn byrevyd me myn eye sight?
 What schuld I telle the answer of the knight?
 His sone was slayn, ther is no more to say.
 Be war therfor with lordes how ye play,
 Syngith *Placebo*,¹ and I schal if I can.
 But if it be unto a pore man;
 To a pore man men schuld his vices telle,
 But not to a lord, they he schuld go to helle.

¹ *Placebo Domino, in regione vivorum* is the rendering in the Vulgate of that passage which, in the authorized version, is translated 'I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living.' It was familiar to everyone in Chaucer's time, as it formed one of the antiphons in the office for the dead; and to sing *placebo* means to be humble and com-
 plaisant.

Lo, irous Cirus¹ thilke Percien,
 How he destruyed the ryver of Gysen,
 For that an hors of his was dreynt therinne,
 Whan that he wente Babiloyne to wyne:
 He made that the ryver was so smal,
 That wommen mighte wade it over al.
 Lo, what sayde he, that so wel teche can?²
 Ne be no felaw to an irous man,
 Ne with no wood man walke by the way,
 Lest the repent. I wel no lenger say.
 Now, Thomas, leve brother, leve thin ire,
 Thow schalt me fynde as just as is a squire;
 Thyn anger doth the al to sore smerte,
 Hald not the develes knyf ay at thyn herte,³
 But schewe to me al thy confessioun.'

'Nay,' quod this syke man, 'by seynt Symoun,
 I have ben schripen this day of my curate:⁴
 I have him told holly al myn estate.
 Nedith no more to speken of it, saith he,
 But if me list of myn humilite.'

'Gif me than of thy good to make our cloyster,'
 Quod he, 'for many a muscle and many an oyster
 Hath ben oure foode, our cloyster to arreyse,
 Whan other men han ben ful wel at eyse;
 And yit, God wot, unnethe the foundement
 Parformed is, ne of oure pavyment
 Is nought a tyle⁵ yit withinne our wones;
 By God, we owe yit fourty pound for stones.

¹ This story of Cyrus is told in Seneca, and Herodotus, lib. i.; but the river is called Gyndes. It is probably that mentioned in Gen. ii. 13.

² Prov. xxii. 24.

³ This is very expressive of the torment of anger, and recalls Swift's epitaph—'Ubi sæva indignatio ulterius cor lacerare nequit.' Harl. MS., *abray*.

⁴ I have to-day been confessed by my parish priest;—an announcement especially displeasing to the friar.

⁵ Churches and public buildings were usually floored with tiles of various colours and patterns, in the arrangement of which exquisite taste was displayed. At the introduction of the rage for pseudo-classic art, these were replaced by dingy stone.

Now help, Thomas, for him that harewed helle,
 Or elles moote we oure bookes selle;
 And gif yow lakke oure predicacioun,
 Thanne goth the world al to destruccioun.
 For who so wold us fro the world byreve,
 So God me save, Thomas, by youre leve,
 He wolde byreve out of this world the sonne.
 For who can teche and werken as we conne?
 And this is not of litel tyme,' quod he,
 'But siththen Elye was her, or Elisee,¹
 Han freres ben, fynde I of record,
 In charite, i-thanked be oure Lord.
 Now, Thomas, help for saynte Charite.'
 Adoun he sette him anoon on his kne.

This sike man wex welneigh wood for ire,
 He wolde that the frere had ben on fuyre
 With his fals dissimulacioun.
 'Such thing as is in my possessioun,'
 Quod he, 'that may I geve yow and noon other;
 Ye sayn me thus, how that I am your brother.'
 'Ye certes,' quod the frere, 'trusteth wel;
 I took our dame the letter,² under our sel.'
 'Now wel,' quod he, 'and somewhat schal I give
 Unto your holy convent whils that I lyve;
 And in thyn hond thou schalt it have anoon,
 On this condicioun, and other noon,
 That thou depart it so, my deere brother,
 That every frere have as inoche as other,
 This schaltow swere on thy professioun,
 Withouten fraude or cavillacioun.'
 'I swere it,' quod this frere, 'upon my faith.'
 And therwith his hond in his he laith;

¹ The Harl. MS., for *Elisee*, reads *Ele*. The friars claimed Elijah and Elisha, who, it appears (1 Kings xvii), were supported on the voluntary principle, as examples of their mode of life.

² Thus Jacke Upland asks the friar, 'Why aske ye no letters of bretherhead of other men's praiers, as ye desire that other men aske letters of you?' And again, 'Why be ye so hardie to grant by *letters of fraternitie* to men and women, that they shall have part and merit of all your goode deeds?'

'Lo here myn hond, in me schal be no lak.'
 'Now thanne, put thyn hond down at my bak,'
 Sayde this man, 'and grope wel byhynde,
 Bynethe my buttok, there schaltow fynde
 A thing, that I have hud in prívete.'
 'A!' thought this frere, 'that schal go with **me**.'
 And down his hond he launcheth to the clifte,
 In hope for to fynde ther à gifte.

And whan this syke man felte this frere
 Aboute his tuel grope ther and heere,
 Amyd his hond he leet the freere a fart;
 Ther is no capul drawyng in a cart,
 That might have let a fart of such a soun.
 The frere upstart, as doth a wood lyoun:
 'A! false cherl,' quod he, 'for Goddes bones!
 This hastow in despit don for the noones;
 Thou schalt abyé this fart, if that I may.'

His meyne, which that herd of this affray,
 Com lepard in, and chased out the frere.
 And forth he goth with a foul angry cheere,
 And fat his felaw, there lay his stoor;
 He lokid as it were a wylde boor,
 And grynte with his teeth, so was he wroth.
 A stordy paas down to the court¹ he goth,
 Wher as ther wonyd a man of gret honour,
 To whom that he was alway confessour;
 This worthy man was lord of that village.
 This frere com, as he were in a rage,
 Wher that this lord sat etyng at his bord:
 Unnethe might the frere speke a word,
 Til atte last he sayde, 'God yow se!'²
 This lord gan loke, and sayde, *Benedicite!*

¹ The residence of the lord of the manor was sometimes called 'the court,' from the manorial and other courts held there; just as the residence of the sovereign for the time being is called the court, because formerly the courts of law always followed the king's person.

² A laconic form of salutation, characteristic of an angry man, and meaning, May God look upon you.

What, frere Johan! what maner world is this?
 I se wel that som thing is amys;
 Ye loke as though the woode were ful of thevya.
 Sit doun anoon, and tel me what your gref is,
 And it schal ben amendit, if that I may.'

'I have,' quod he, 'had a despit to day,
 God yelde yow, adoun in youre vilage,
 That in this world is noon so pore a page,
 That he nold have abhominacioun
 Of that I have receyved in youre toun;
 And yet ne grevith me no thing so sore,
 As that this elde cherl, with lokkes hore,
 Blasphemed hath our holy covent eeke.'
 'Now, maister,' quod this lord, 'I yow biseke.'
 'No maister, sir,' quod he, 'but servitour;
 Though I have had in scole such honour.¹
 God likith not that Raby men us calle,
 Neither in market, neyther in your large halle.'
 'No fors,' quod he, 'tellith me al your greef.'
 This frere sayd, 'Sire, an odious meschief
 This day bytid is to myn ordre and me,
 And so *par consequens* to ech degre
 Of holy chirche, God amend it soone!
 'Sir,' quod the lord, 'ye wot what is to doone;
 Distempre yow nought, ye ben my confessour,
 Ye ben the salt of therthe, and savyour:²
 For Goddes love, youre pacience ye holde;
 Tel me your greef.' And he anoon him tolde
 As ye han herd bifore, ye wot wel what.

The lady of that hous ay stille sat,
 Til sche had herd what the frere sayde.
 'Ey, Goddes moodir!' quod she, 'blisful mayde!

¹ The friar disclaims the title of Maister, as being forbidden (Matt. xiii), though he says he is entitled to it by virtue of his degree of M.A. in the schools. This is an admirable picture of an angry man; nothing pleases him, not even the courtesy of his patron the great man.

² Matt. v. 13.

Is ther ought elies? tel me faithfully.
 'Madame,' quod he, 'how thynke yow therby?'
 'How that me thynkith?' quod sche; 'so God me
 speede!

I say, a cherl hath doon a cherles deede.
 What schuld I say? God let him never the!
 His syke heed is full of vanyte.
 I hold him in a maner frenesye.'
 'Madame,' quod he, 'I wis I schal not lye,
 But I in othir wise may be wreke,
 I schal defame him over al wher I speke;
 The false blasfememour, that chargid me
 To parten that wil not departed be,
 To every man y-liche, with meschaunce!'

The lord sat stille, as he were in a traunce,
 And in his hert he rollid up and down,
 'How had this cherl ymaginacioun
 To schewe such a probleme to the frere?
 Never erst¹ er now herd I of such matiere;
 I trowe the devel put it in his mynde.
 In arsmetrik schal ther no man fynde
 Biforn this day of such a questioun.
 Who schulde make a demonstracioun,
 That every man schuld have alyk his part
 As of a soun or savour of a fart?
 O nyce proude cherl, I schrew his face!
 Lo, sires,' quod the lord, with harde grace,
 'Who ever herde of such a thing er now?
 To every man y-like? tel me how.
 It is impossible, it may not be.
 Ey, nyce cherl, God let him never the!
 The romblyng of a fart, and every soun,
 Nis but of aier reverberacioun,
 And ever it wastith lyte and lyte away;
 Ther nys no man can deme, by my fay,

¹ Harl. MS. *est*.

If that it were departed equally.
 What, lo, my cherl,¹ what, lo, how schrewedly
 Unto my confessour to day he spak!
 I hold him certainly demoniak.
 Now etith your mete, and let the cherl go play,
 Let him go honge himself on devel way!’

Now stood the lordes squier at the bord,
 That carf his mete,² and herde word by word
 Of al this thing, which that I of have sayd.
 ‘My lord,’ quod he, ‘be ye nought evel payd,
 I couthe telle for a gowne-cloth
 To yow, sir frere, so that ye be not wroth,
 How that this fart even departed schuld be
 Among your covent, if I comaunded be.’
 ‘Tel,’ quod the lord, ‘and thou schalt have anoon
 A gounne-cloth, by God, and³ by Seint Johan!’
 ‘My lord,’ quod he, ‘whan that the wedir is fair,
 Withoute wynd, or pertourbyng of ayr,
 Let bring a large whel into this halle,
 But loke that it have his spokes alle;
 Twelf spokes hath a cart whel comunly;
 And bring me twelve freres, wit ye why?
 For threttene⁴ is a covent as I gesse;
 Your noble confessour, her God him blesse,

¹ This nobleman speaks of the churl as *my* churl, that is, *my* serf or villain. On the extinction of slavery, which thus appears to have been in force in Chaucer's time, Ld. Macaulay remarks:—‘The benevolent spirit of the Christian morality is undoubtedly adverse to distinctions of caste. But to the Church of Rome such distinctions are peculiarly odious, &c.’ To the influence, therefore, of the theology of the church of the middle ages, he ascribes its imperceptible disuse. He adds:—‘Some faint traces of the institution of villanage were detected by the curious so late as the days of the Stuarts; nor has that institution ever, to this hour, been abolished by statute.’—*Hist. Eng.*, vol. i., p. 22.

² It appears that the elegant and rational practice latterly introduced, of having the dishes carved by an attendant, is a return to that of our ancestors.

³ *And* is omitted in the Harl. MS., but it is here supplied from Tyrwhitt, as manifestly required by the sense and metre.

⁴ Mr. Wright quotes from Thorn to show that a *convent* of monks, with their superior, properly consisted of thirteen, in imitation of

Schal parfourn up the nombre of this covent.
 Thanne schal thay knele doun by oon assent,
 And to every spokes ende in this manere
 Ful sadly lay his nose schal a frere;
 Your noble confessour ther, God him save,
 Schal hold his nose upright under the nave.
 Than schal this churl, with bely stif and tought
 As eny tabor, hider ben y-brought;
 And sette him on the whele of this cart
 Upon the nave, and make him lete a fart,
 And ye schul seen, up peril of my lif,
 By verray proef that is demonstratif,
 That equally the soun of it wol wende,
 And eek the styng, unto the spokes ende;
 Save that this worthy man, your confessour,
 (Bycause he is a man of gret honour)
 Schal have the firste fruyt, as resoun is.
 The noble usage of freres is this,
 The worthy men of hem first schal be served.
 And certeynly he hath it wel deserved;
 He hath to day taught us so mochil good,
 With preching in the pulpit ther he stood,
 That I may vouchesauf, I say for me,
 He hadde the firste smel of fartes thre;
 And so wold al his covent hardily,
 He berith him so fair and holily.'

The lord, the lady, and ech man, sauf the frere,
 Sayde that Jankyn spak in this matiere
 As wel as Euclide, or elles Phtolome.
 Touchand the cherl, thay sayd that subtilte
 And high wyt made him speken as he spak;
 He nas no fool, ne no demoniak.
 And Jankyn hath i-wonne a new goune;
 My tale is don, we ben almost at toune.

Christ and the twelve apostles. Anno Domini M.C.XLVI., iste Hugo reparavit antiquum numerum monachorum istius monasterii, et erant lx. monachi professi præter abbatem, hoc est, *quinque conventus in universo*.—*Decem Scriptores*, col., 1807.

THE CLERK OF OXENFORDES PROLOGE.

‘SIR Clerk of Oxenford,’ our hoste sayde,
 ‘Ye ryde as stille and coy as doth a mayde,
 Were newe spoused, sittying at the bord;¹
 This day ne herd I of your mouth a word.
 I trowe ye study aboute som sophime;
 But Salomon saith, every thing hath tyme.²
 For Goddis sake! as beth of better cheere,
 It is no tyme for to stody hie.
 Tel us som mery tale, by your fay;
 For what man is entred unto play,
 He moot nedes unto that play assent.
 But prechith not, as freres doon in Lent,
 To make us for our olde synnes wepe,
 Ne that thy tale make us for to slepe.
 Tel us som mery thing of adventures.
 Youre termes, your colours, and your figures,
 Keep hem in stoor, til so be that ye endite
 High style, as whan that men to kynges write.
 Spekith so playn at this tyme, I yow pray,
 That we may understonde what ye say.’

This worthy Clerk benignely answerde;
 ‘Sir host,’ quod he, ‘I am under your yerde,³
 Ye have of us as now the governaunce,
 And therfor wol I do yow obeissaunce,
 Als fer as resoun askith hardily.
 I wil yow telle a tale, which that I
 Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk,
 As proved by his wordes and his werk.
 He is now deed, and nayled in his chest.
 Now God give his soule wel good rest!

¹ Tyrwhitt remarks that this line is an example of that construction common to all writers of the age, which omits the relative pronoun.

² Eccles. iii. 1.

³ *Sub ferulâ tuâ*, under your rod, a common expression to denote the state of pupillage.

Fraunces Petrark,¹ the laureat poete,
 Highte this clerk, whos rethorique swete
 Enlumynd al Ytail of poetrie,
 As Linian² did of philosophie,
 Or lawue, or other art particulere;
 But deth, that wol not suffre us duellen heere,
 But as it were a twyncling of an ye,
 Hem bothe hath slayn, and alle we schul dye.
 But forth to telle of this worthy man,
 That taughte me this tale, as I bigan,
 I say that he first with heigh stile enditith
 (Er he the body of his tale writith)
 A proheme, in the which descrivith he
 Piemounde, and of Saluces the contre,
 And spekith of Appenynne the hulles hye,
 That ben the boundes of al west Lombardye;
 And of mount Vesulus in special,
 Wher as the Poo out of a welle smal
 Takith his firste springyng and his sours,
 That est-ward ay encreceth in his cours
 To Emyl-ward,³ to Ferare, and to Venise,
 To which a long thing were to devyse.
 And trewely, as to my juggement,
 Me thinketh it a thing impertinent,
 Save that he wold conveyen his matiere;
 But this is the tale which that ye schuln heere.'

¹ See *ante*, p. 21, *et seq.* Even if the reader should not be disposed to think that Chaucer meant to represent himself, in the person of the clerk, as having learned this tale from the mouth of Petrarch, at Padua, yet it must be conceded that this passage looks like an acknowledgment, on the part of Chaucer himself, of the obligations under which he lay to Petrarch, gracefully introduced in the words of the clerk. One cannot conceive what object the poet could have had in the passage except to commemorate a real interview.

² Joannes of Lignano, near Milan, a canonist and natural philosopher, who flourished about 1378, mentioned by Panzerollus, *De Cl. Leg. Interpret.*, lib. iii. c. xxv.

³ Petrarch speaks of the Po as dividing the Æmilian (hence Chaucer's Emyl-ward) and Flaminian regions from Venice.

THE CLERKES TALE.

[THAT the original of this story was older than Boccaccio's novel admits of no doubt. Petrarch was acquainted with it many years before it was related by Boccaccio, whom he had himself, probably, supplied with the chief incidents. But, while we have many subsequent forms of it, the novel in the *Decameron* is the earliest now known to exist. The French are entitled to the credit of having first introduced it to the stage, a play on the subject having been produced at Paris in 1393, about nineteen years after Petrarch's death. Dramas were afterwards founded upon it in Italy, Germany, and England. Chaucer's tale is the earliest narrative in our language of the woes and virtues of *Patient Grissell*, since rendered familiar to the English reader by the prominent place it occupies in our ballad literature. Few stories enjoy so wide a popularity. The incredible resignation of the heroine may be said to have passed into a proverb.

Although Chaucer was indebted to Petrarch for his materials, the story acquires originality in his hands from the sweetness and tenderness of expression he has infused into the relation. Charles James Fox, who had never seen Petrarch's version, describes with accuracy the character of this poem when he observes, in one of his letters to Lord Holland, that it closely resembles the manner of Ariosto.]

THER is at the west ende of Ytaile,
 Doun at the root of Vesulius the colde,
 A lusty playn, abundaunt of vitaille,
 Wher many a tour and toun thou maist byholde,
 That foundid were in tyme of fadres olde.
 And many anothir delitable sight,
 And Saluces this noble contray hight.
 A marquys whilom duellid in that lond,
 As were his worthy eldris him bifore,
 And obeisaunt ay redy to his hond,

Were alle his liegis, bothe lesse and more.
 Thus in delyt he lyveth and hath don yore,
 Biloved and drad, thurgh favour of fortune,
 Bothe of his lordes and of his comune.

Therwith he was, as to speke of lynage,
 The gentileste born of Lumbardye,
 A fair persone, and strong, and yong of age,
 And ful of honour and of curtesie;
 Discret y-nough his contre for to gye,
 Savyng in som thing he was to blame;
 And Wautier was this yonge lordes name.

I blame him thus, that he considered nought
 In tyme comyng what mighte bityde,
 But on his lust present was al his thought,
 As for to hauke and hunte on every syde;
 Wel neigh al othir cures let he slyde,
 And eek he nolde (that was the worst of al)
 Wedde no wyf for no thing that might bifal.

Only that poynt his poeple bar so sore,
 That flokmel on a day to him thay went,
 And oon of hem, that wisest was of lore,
 (Or elles that the lord wolde best assent
 That he schuld telle him what his poeple ment,
 Or ellis couthe he schewe wel such matiere)
 He to the marquys sayd as ye schuln hiere.

‘O noble marquys, youre humanite
 Assureth us and giveth us hardynesse,
 As ofte as tyme is of necessite,
 That we to yow may telle oure hevynesse;
 Acceptith, lord, now of your gentillesse,¹
 That we with pitous hert unto yow playne,
 And let your eeris my vois not disdeyne.

‘And have I nought to doon in this matere
 More than another man hath in this place,
 Yit for as moche as ye, my lord so deere,

¹ Harl. MS, *necessitee*; a mere repetition of the last word of the preceding line but one.

Han alway sehewed me favour and grace,
I dar the better ask of yow a space
Of audience, to sehewen oure request,¹
And ye, my lord, to doon right as yow lest.

‘For eertes, lord, so wel us likith yow
And al your werk, and ever han doon, that we
Ne eouthen not ourselve devysen how
We mighte lyve more in felicite;
Save oon thing, lord, if that your wille be,
That for to be a weddid man yow list,
Than were your pepel in sovereign hertes rest.

‘Bowith your neek undir that blisful yok
Of sovereignete, nought of servise,
Which that men elepe spousail or wedlok;
And thenketh, lord, among your thoughtes wise,
How that our dayes passe in sondry wyse;
For though we slepe, or wake, or rome, or ryde,
Ay fleth the tyme, it wil no man abyde.

‘And though your grene youthe floure as yit,
In erepith age alway as stille as stoon,
And deth manasith every age, and smyt
In eeh estat, for ther aseapith noon.
And as certeyn, as we knowe everychon
That we schuln deye, as uncerteyn we alle
Ben of that day that deth schal on us falle.

‘Aceptith thanne of us the trewe entent,
That never yit refusid youre hest,
And we wil, lord, if that ye wil assent,
Chese yow a wyf, in sehort tyme atte lest,
Born of the gentilest and the heighest
Of al this lond, so that it oughte seme
Honour to God and yow, as we can deme.

‘Deliver us out of al this busy drede
And tak a wyf, for hihe Goddes sake.
For if it so bifel, as God forbede,

¹ Harl. MS., *to asken*.

That thurgh your deth your lignage schuld aslake,
 And that a straunge successour schuld take
 Your heritage, O! wo were us on lyve!
 Wherfor we pray yow hastily to wyve.'

Her meeke prayer and her pitous chere
 Made the marquys to han pite.
 'Ye wolde,' quod he, 'myn owne poeple deere,
 To that I never erst thought constreigne me.
 I me rejoysid of my liberte,
 That selden tyme is founde in mariage;
 Ther I was fre, I mot ben in servage.

'But natheles I se youre trewe¹ entent,
 And trust upon your witt, and have doon ay;
 Wherfor of my fre wil I wil assent
 To wedde me, as soon as ever I may.
 But ther as ye have profred me to day
 To chese me a wyf, I wol relese
 That choys, and pray yow of that profre cesse.

'For God it woot, that childer ofte been
 Unlik her worthy eldris hem bifore;
 Bounte cometh al of God, nought of the streen²
 Of which thay ben engendrid and i-bore.
 I trust in Goddes bounte, and therfore
 My mariage, and myn estat and rest,
 I him bytake, he may doon as him lest.

'Let me aloon in chesyng of my wif,
 That charge upon my bak I wil endure.
 But I yow pray, and charge upon your lyf,
 That what wyf that I take, ye me assure
 To worschip whil that hir lif may endure,
 In word and werk, bothe heer and every where,
 As sche an emperoures doughter were.

'And forthermor thus schul ye swer, that ye
 Ageins my chois schuln never grucche ne stryve.

¹ Harl. MS., *se of you the trewe*.

² Virtue comes from God, and not from the *streen*, or strain (race) from which men are descended.

For sins I schal forgo my liberte
 At your request, as ever mot I thrive,
 Ther as myn hert is set, ther wil I wyve.
 And but ye wil assent in such manere,
 I pray yow spek no more of this matiere.'

With hertly wil thay sworn and assentyn
 To al this thing, ther sayde no wight nay,
 Bysechyng him of grace, er that thay wentyn,
 That he wold graunten hem a certeyn day
 Of his spousail, as soone as ever he may ;
 For yit alway the peple som what dredde
 Lest that the marquys wolde no wyf wedde.

He graunten hem a day, such as him lest,
 On which he wolde be weddid sicurly ;
 And sayd he dede al this at her requeste.
 And thay with humble hert ful buxomly,
 Knelyng upon her knees ful reverently,
 Him thanken alle, and thus thay have an ende
 Of her entent, and hom agein they wende.

And herupon he to his officeris
 Comaundith for the feste to purveye,
 And to his prive knightes and squyeres
 Such charge gaf as him list on hem leye :
 And thay to his comaundement obeye,
 And ech of hem doth his diligence
 To doon unto the feste reverence.

PARS SECUNDA.

NOUGHTE fer fro thilke palys honorable,
 Wher as this marquys schop his mariage.
 Ther stood a throp, of sighte delitable,
 In which that pore folk of that vilage
 Hadden her bestes and her herburgage,
 And after her labour took her sustienauce.
 After the erthe gaf hem abundaunce.

Among this pore folk there duelt a man,
 Which that was holden porest of hem alle ;

But heighe God som tyme sende can
 His grace unto a litel oxe stalle.
 Janicula men of that throop him calle.
 A doughter had he, fair y-nough to sight,
 And Grisildes this yonge mayden¹ hight.

But for to speke of hir vertuous beaute,
 Than was sche oon the fayrest under sonne;
 For porely i-fostered up was sche,
 No licorous lust was in hir body ronne;
 Wel ofter of the welle than of the tonne
 Sche dronk, and for sche wolde vertu please,
 Sche knew wel labour, but noon ydel ease.

But though this mayden tender were of age,
 Yet in the brest of her virginite
 Ther was enclosed rype and sad corrage;²
 And in gret reverence and charite
 Hir olde pore fader fostered sche;
 A fewe scheep spynnyng on the feld sche kept,
 Sche nolde³ not ben ydel til sche slept.

And whan sche com hom sche wolde brynge
 Wortis and other herbis tymes ofte,
 The which sche schred and seth for her lyvyng,⁴
 And made hir bed ful hard, and no thing softe.
 And ay sche kept hir fadres lif on lofte,⁵
 With every obeissance and diligence,
 That child may do to fadres reverence.

Upon Grisildes, the pore creature,
 Ful ofte sithes this marquys set his ye,
 As he on huntyng rood peraventure.
 And whan it fel he mighte hir espye,
 He not with wantoun lokyng of folye

¹ Harl. MS., *daughter*.

² A mature and serious disposition.

³ *Nolde* is here substituted for *nold*, the reading of the Harl. MS., as being more correct grammatically, and supplying a syllable required by the metre. Thus in the next line *wolde* occurs in the very same construction.

⁴ Which she sliced and boiled, or seethed for her food.

⁵ She kept her father's life from sinking, that is, supported him.

His eyghen cast upon hir, but in sad wyse
 Upon hir cheer he wold him oft avise,
 Comendyng in his hert hir wommanhede,
 And eek hir vertu, passyng other¹ wight
 Of so yong age, as wel in cheer as dede.
 For though the poeple have no gret insight
 In vertu, he considereth aright
 Hir bounte, and desposed that he wolde
 Wedde hir oonly, if ever he wedde scholde.

The day of weddyng cam, but no wight cam
 Telle what womman it schulde be;
 For which mervayle wondrith many a man,
 And sayden, whan they were in privite,
 'Wol nought our lord yit leve his vanite?
 Wol he not wedde? allas, allas the while!
 Why wol he thus himself and us bigyle?'

But natheles this marquys hath doon make
 Of gemmes, set in gold and in asure,²
 Broches and rynges, for Grisildes sake,
 And of hir clothing took he the mesure,
 By a mayde y-lik to hir of stature,
 And eek of other ornamentes alle
 That unto such a weddyng schulde falle.

The tyme of undern³ of the same day
 Approchith, that this weddyng schulde be,
 And al the palys put was in array,

¹ The Harl. MS. reads *any other wight*; but *any*, which seems redundant, and spoils the metre, has been omitted.

² Azure, or blue, was the colour of truth.

³ The glossary explains this to mean *the third hour of the day*, or *nine o'clock*. In a subsequent line [see p. 415] where this word occurs again, the original has *horá tertiá*, and, in this place, *horá prandii*; whence it may be inferred that in Chaucer's time *nine o'clock*, or *underne*, was the usual hour of *prandium* or *dinner*.—See TYRWHITT. The *prandium* of that period, however, must not be confounded with the modern dinner. It took place at nine o'clock, hence called *horá prandii*. There was another meal at noon, or soon after; and a supper (see *Squyeres Tale*) before going to bed. The two forms of grace in the Breviary are for *ante prandium* and *ante cœnam*. In *The Schipmannes Tale* it appears that the family heard mass, and then went to dinner; and as nobody

Bothe halle and chambur, y-lik here degre,¹
 Houses of office stuffid with plente;
 Ther maystow se of deyntevous vitayle,
 That may be founde, as fer as lastith Itaile.

This real marquys, really arrayd,
 Lordes and ladyes in his compaignye,
 The which unto the feste were prayed,
 And of his retenu the bachelerie.²
 With many a soun of sondry melodye,
 Unto the vilage, of which I tolde,
 In this array the right way han they holde.

Grysild of this (God wot) ful innocent,
 That for hir schapen was al this array,
 To fecche water at a welle is went,
 And cometh hom as soone as sche may,
 For wel sche had herd say, that ilke day
 The marquys schulde wedde, and, if sche might,
 Sche wold have seyen somewhat of that sight.

Sche sayd, 'I wol with other maydenes stonde,
 That ben my felawes, in oure dore, and see
 The marquysesse,³ and therfore wol I fonde
 To don at hom, as soone as it may be,
 The labour which that longeth unto me,
 And thanne may I at leysir hir byholde,
 And sche the way into the castel holde.'

And as sche wold over the threissfold goon,
 The marquys cam and gan hir for to calle.
 And sche set down her water-pot anoon
 Bisides the threischfold of this oxe stalle,⁴
 And down upon hir knees sche gan falle,

could communicate after eating, the *prandium* was, therefore, the first meal. In some cases, there might have been a slight *collation* earlier; as is still the custom abroad, where a cup of coffee is sometimes taken an hour or two before the *déjeuner à la fourchette*, which answers to the *prandium*, and is the first regular meal.

¹ Other MSS. read *eche in his degre*.

² The knights or bachelors.

³ Marchioness.

⁴ In Italy, and other continental countries, the peasantry to this day live in the same houses with their cattle.

And with sad countenaunce she knelith stille,
Til sche had herd what was the lordes wille.

This thoughtful marquys spak unto this mayde
Ful soberly, and sayd in this manere:

‘Wher is your fader, Grisildes?’ he sayde.

And sche with reverence in humble cheere

Answerd, ‘Lord, he is al redy heere.’

And in sche goth withouten lenger let,

And to the marquys sche hir fader fet.

He by the hond than takith this olde man,

And sayde thus, whan he him had on syde:

‘Janicula, I neither may ne can

Lenger the plesauns of myn herte hyde;

If that ye vouchesauf, what so betyde,

Thy doughter wil I take er that I wende

As for my wyf, unto hir lyves ende.

‘Thow lovest me, I wot it wel certeyn,

And art my faithful leige-man¹ i-bore,

And al that likith me, I dar wel sayn,

It likith the, and specially therfore

Tel me that poynt, as ye have herd bifore,

If that thou wolt unto that purpos drawe,

To take me as for thy sone-in-lawe.’

The sodeyn caas the man astoneyd tho,

That reed he wax, abaischt, and al quakyng

He stood, unnethe sayd he wordes mo,

But oonly this: ‘Lord,’ quod he, ‘my willyng

Is as ye wol, agenst youre likyng

I wol no thing, ye be my lord so deere;

Right as yow list, governith this matiere.’

‘Yit wol I,’ quod this markys softly,

‘That in thy chambre, I and thou and sche

Have a collacioun, and wostow why?

For I wol aske if it hir wille be

To be my wyf, and reule hir after me;

And al this schal be doon in thy presence,

I wol nought speke out of thyng audience.’

¹ See *ante*, p. 122, note 1.

And in the chamber, whil thay were aboute
 The tretys, which as ye schul after hiere,
 The poeple cam unto the hous withoute,
 And wondrid hem, in how honest manere
 And tendurly sche kept hir fader deere;
 But outerly Grisildes wonder might,
 For never erst ne saugh sche such a sight.

No wonder is though that sche were astoned,
 To seen so gret a gest come into that place;
 Sche never was to suche gestes woned,
 For which sche loked with ful pale face.
 But schortly this matiere forth to chace,
 These arn the wordes that the marquys sayde
 To this benigne, verray, faithful mayde.

‘Grisyld,’ he sayde, ‘ye schul wel understonde,
 It liketh to your fader and to me,
 That I yow wedde, and eek it may so stonde,
 As I suppose ye wil that it so be;
 But these demaundes aske I first,’ quod he,
 ‘That sith it schal be doon in hasty wyse;
 Wol ye assent, or elles yow avyse?’

‘I say this, be ye redy with good hert
 To al my lust, and that I frely may
 As me best liste do yow laughe or smert,
 And never ye to gruch it, night ne day;
 And eek whan I say ye, ye say not nay,
 Neyther by word, ne frownyng contenance?
 Swer this, and here swer I oure alliaunce.’

Wondryng upon this word, quakyng for drede,
 Sche sayde: ‘Lord, undigne and unworthy
 I am, to thilk honour that ye me bede;
 But as ye wil your self, right so wol I;
 And here I swere, that never wityngly
 In werk, ne thought, I nyl yow disobeye
 For to the deed,¹ though me were loth to deye.’

¹ [The true reading is ‘For to be deed,’ where *deed* is a past participle and equivalent in meaning to ‘slain.’—W. W. S.]

‘This is y-nough, Grisilde myn,’ quod he.
And forth goth he with a ful sobre chere,
Out at the dore, and after that cam sche,
And to the pepul he sayd in this manere :
‘This is my wyf,’ quod he, ‘that stondith heere.
Honoureth hir, and loveth hir, I yow pray,
Who so me loveth ; ther is no more to say.’

And for that no thing of hir olde gere
Sche schulde brynge unto his hous, he bad
That wommen schuld despoilen hir right there,
Of which these ladyes were nought ful glad
To handle hir clothes wherein sche was clad ;
But natheles this mayde bright of hew
Fro foot to heed they schredde han al newe.

Hir heeres han thay kempt, that lay untressed
Ful rudely, and with hir fynGRES smale
A coroun on hir heed thay han i-dressed,
And set hir ful of nowches gret and smale.
Of hir array what schuld I make a tale ?
Unnethe the poeple hir knew for hir fairnesse,
Whan sche translated was in such richesse.

This marquis hath hir spoused with a ryng
Brought for the same cause, and than hir sette
Upon an hors snow-whyte, and wel amblyng,
And to his palys, er he lenger lette,
(With joyful poeple, that hir ladde and mette)¹
Conveyed hire, and thus the day they spende
In revel, til the sonne gan descende.

And schortly forth this tale for to chace,
I say, that to this newe marquisesse
God hath such favour sent hir of his grace,
That it ne semyd not by liklynesse
That sche was born and fed in rudenesse,
As in a cote, or in an oxe stalle,
But norischt in an emperoures halle.

¹ Accompanied and met her.

To every wight sche waxen is so deere,
 And worschipful, that folk ther sche was born,
 And from hir burthe knew hir yer by yere,
 Unnethe trowed thay, but dorst han sworn,
 That to Janicle, of which I spak biforn
 Sche doughter were, for as by conjecture
 Hem thought sche was another creature.

For though that ever vertuous was sche,
 Sche was encreased in such excellence
 Of thewes goode, i-set in high bounte,
 And so discret, and fair of eloquence,
 So benigne, and so digne of reverence,
 And couthe so the poeples hert embrace,
 That ech hir loveth that lokith in hir face.

Nought oonly of Saluce in the toun
 Publissched was the bounte of hir name,
 But eek byside in many a regioun,
 If oon sayd wel, another sayd the same.
 So sprad of hire heigh bounte the fame,
 That men and wommen, as wel yong as olde,
 Gon to Saluce upon hir to byholde.

Thus Walter louly, nay but really,¹
 Weddid with fortunat honestete,
 In Goddes pees lyveth ful esily
 At home, and outward grace y-nough hath he ;
 And for he saugh that under low degre
 Was ofte vertu y-hid, the poeple him helde
 A prudent man, and that is seen ful selde.

Nought oonly this Grisildes thurgh hir witte
 Couthe al the feet of wifly homlynesse,²
 But eek whan that the tyme required it,
 The comun profyt couthe sche redresse ;
 Ther nas discord, rancour, ne hevynesse
 In al that lond, that sche ne couthe appese,
 And wisly bryng hem alle in rest and ese.

¹ This Walter wedded humbly, or (I should rather say) royally
 —*scil.*, because of his wife's virtue.

² Harl. MS., *humblesse*.

Though that hir housbond absent were anon,
 If gentilmen, or other of hir contre,
 Were wroth, sche wolde brynge hem at oon,
 So wyse and rype wordes hadde sche,
 And juggement of so gret equite,
 That sche from heven sent was, as men wende,
 Poeple to save, and every wrong to anende.

Nought longe tyme after that this Grisilde
 Was wedded, sche a doughter hath i-bore;
 Al had hir lever han had a knave¹ childe,
 Glad was this marquis and the folk therfore,
 For though a mayden child come al byfore,
 Sche may unto a knave child atteigne
 By liklihed, sith sche nys not bareigne.

INCIPIT TERTIA PARS.

THER fel, as fallith many times mo,
 Whan that this child hath souked but a throwe,
 This marquys in his herte longith so
 Tempte his wyf, hir sadnesse² for to knowe,
 That he ne might out of his herte throwe
 This mervaylous desir his wyf tassaye;
 Nedeles, God wot,³ he thought hir to affraye.

He had assayed hir y-nough bifore,
 And fond hir ever good, what needith it
 Hire to tempte, and alway more and more?
 Though som men prayse it for a subtil wit,
 But as for me, I say that evel it sit
 Tassay a wyf whan that it is no neede,
 And putte hir in anguysch and in dreede.

For which this marquis wrought in this manere;
 He com aloone a-night ther as sche lay
 With sterne face, and with ful trouble cheere,

¹ *Knave* meant—1, a boy (German, *knabe*); 2, a servant, like *garçon*; 3, from the peculiar propensities of the latter class, a rogue.

² To know her sincerity.

³ Harl. MS., *now God wot*.

And sayde thus, 'Grisild,' quod he, 'that day
That I yow took out of your pore array,
And putte yow in estat of heigh noblesse,
Ye¹ have not that forgeten, as I gesse.

'I say, Grisild, this present dignite
In which that I have put yow, as I trowe,
Makith yow not forgetful for to be
That I yow took in pore estat ful lowe,
For eny wele ye moot your selve knowe.²
Tak heed of every word that I yow say,
Ther is no wight that herith it but we tway.

'Ye wot your self how that ye comen heere
Into this hous, it is nought long ago;
And though to me that ye be leef and deere,
Unto my gentils ye be no thing so.
Thay seyn, to hem it is gret schame and wo
For to ben subject and ben in servage
To the, that born art of a smal village.

'And namely syn thy doughter was i-bore,
These wordes han thay spoken douteles.
But I desire, as I have doon byfore,
To lyve my lif with hem in rest and pees;
I may not in this caas be reccheles;
I moot do with thy doughter for the best,
Not as I wolde, but as my pepul lest.

'And yit, God wot, this is ful loth to me.
But natheles withoute youre witynge
Wol I not doon; but this wol I,' quod he,
'That ye to me assent as in this thing.
Schew now your paciens in your wirching,
That thou me hightest and swor in yon village,
That day that maked was oure mariage.'

Whan sche had herd al this sche nought ameevyd
Neither in word, in cheer, or countenaunce,

¹ The Harl. MS. reads *yet*, which makes nonsense. *Ye* is adopted from Tyrwhitt.

² You were in a full low state for any goods that you possessed in your own right.

(For, as it semed, sche was nought agreeved);
 She sayde, 'Lord, al lith in your plesaunce;
 My child and I, with hertly obeisaunce,
 Ben youre al, and ye may save or spille
 Your oughne thing; werkith after your wille.

'Ther may no thing, so God my soule save,
 Liken to yow, that may displesen me;
 Ne I desire no thing for to have,
 Ne drede for to lese, save oonly ye.
 This wil is in myn hert, and ay schal be,
 No length of tyme or deth may this deface,
 Ne chaunge my corrage to other place.'

Glad was this marquis for hir answeyng,
 But yit he feyned as he were not so.
 Al dreery was his cheer and his loking,
 Whan that he schold out of the chambre go.
 Soon after this, a forlong way or tuo,
 He prively hath told al his entent
 Unto a man, and unto his wyf him sent.

A maner sergeant was this prive man,
 The which that faithful oft he founden hadde
 In thinges grete, and eek such folk wel can
 Don execucioun in thinges badde;
 The lord knew wel that he him loved and dradde.
 And whan this sergeant wist his lordes wille,
 Into the chamber he stalked him ful stille.

'Madame,' he sayd, 'ye most forgive it me,
 Though I do thing to which I am constreynt:
 Ye ben so wys, that ful wel knowe ye,
 That lordes hestes mow not ben i-feynit.
 They mowe wel be biwaylit or compleynit;
 But men moot neede unto her lust obeye,
 And so wol I, there is no more to seye.

'This child I am comaundid for to take.'
 And spak no more, but out the child he hent
 Dispitously, and gan a chiere make,
 As though he wold han slayn it, er he went.
 Grisild moot al suffer and al consent;

And as a lamb sche sitteth meeke and stille,
And let this cruel sergeant doon his wille.

Suspecious was the defame of this man,
Suspect his face, suspect his word also,
Suspect the tyme in which he this bigan.
Allas! hir doughter, that she loved so,
Sche wend he wold han slayen it right tho;
But natheles sche neyther weep ne siked,
Conformyng hir to that the marquis liked.

But atte last speke sche bigan,
And mekely sche to the sergeant preyde,
So as he was a worthy gentilman,
That she most kisse hir child, er that it deyde.
And on hir arm¹ this litel child sche leyde,
With ful sad face, and gan the child to blesse,²
And lullyd it, and after gan it kesse.

And thus sche sayd in hir benigne vois:
'Farwel, my child, I schal the never see;
But sith I the have marked withe the croys.
Of thilke fader blessed mot thou be,
That for us deyde upon a cros of tre;
Thy soule, litel child, I him bytake,
For this night schaltow deyen for my sake.'

I trowe that to a norice in this caas
It had ben hard this rewthe for to see;
Wel might a moder than have cryed allas,
But natheles so sad stedefast was sche,
That she endured al adversite,
And to the sergeant mekely sche sayde,
'Have her agayn your litel yonge mayde.

'Goth now,' quod sche, 'and doth my lordes heste.
But o thing wil I pray yow of your grace,
That but my lord forbede yow atte leste,
Burieth this litel body in som place,
That bestes ne no briddes it to-race.'

¹ Other MSS. read *barme*, the lap.

² Made the sign of the cross on it.—See *ante*, p. 21. note 2.

But he no word wil to the purpos say,
But took the child and went upon his way.

This sergeant com unto this lord agayn,
And of Grisildes wordes and hir cheere
He tolde poynt for poynt, in schort and playn,
And him presentith with his doughter deere.
Somwhat this lord hath rewthe in his manere,
But natheles his purpos huld he stille,
As lordes doon, whan thay woln have her wille;

And bad the sergeaunt that he prively
Scholde this childe softe wynde and wrappe,
With alle circumstaunces tendurly,
And carry it in a cofre, or in his lappe;
Upon payne his heed of for to swappe
That no man schulde knowe of this entent,
Ne whens he com, ne whider that he went;

But at Boloigne, to his suster deere,
That thilke tyme of Panik¹ was countesse,
He schuld it take, and schewe hir this matiere,
Byseching her to doon hir busynesse
This child to fostre in all gentillesse,
And whos child that it was he bad hir hyde
From every wight, for ought that mighte bytyde.

The sergeant goth, and hath fulfild this thing.
But to this marquys now retourne we;
For now goth he ful fast ymaginyng,
If by his wyves cher he mighte se,
Or by hir word apparceyve, that sche
Were chaunged, but he hir never couthe fynde,
But ever in oon y-like sad and kynde.

As glad, as humble, as busy in servise
And eek in love, as sche was wont to be,
Was sche to him, in every maner wyse;
Ne of hir doughter nought o word spak sche;
Non accident for noon adversite

¹ Tyrwhitt changed the word to *Pavie*, not adverting to the original, where it is said that the Marquis's sister was married to the Count of *Panico*.

Was seyn in hir, ne never hir doughter name
Ne nempnyd sche, in earnest ne in game.

INCIPIT QUARTA PARS.

IN this estaat ther passed ben foure yer
Er sche with childe was, but, as God wolde,
A knave child sche bar by this Waltier,
Ful gracious, and fair for to biholde;
And whan that folk it to his fader tolde,
Nought oonly he, but al his contre, merye
Was for this child, and God thay thank and herie.

Whan it was tuo yer old, and fro the brest
Departed fro his noris, upon a day
This markys caughte yit another lest
To tempt his wif yit after, if he may.
O! needles was sche tempted in assay;
But weddid men ne knowen no mesure,
Whan that thay fynde a pacient creature.

‘Wyf,’ quod this marquys, ‘ye han herd er this
My peple sekly berith oure mariage,
And namly syn my sone y-boren is,
Now is it wors than ever in al our age;
The murmur sleth myn hert and my corrage,
For to myn eeris cometh the vois so smerte,
That it wel neigh destroyed hath myn herte.

‘Now say thay thus, Whan Wanter is agoon,
Than schal the blood of Janicle succede,
And ben our lord, for other have we noon.
Suche wordes saith my poeple, out of drede.¹
Wel ought I of such murmur taken heede,
For certeynly I drede such sentence,
Though thay not pleynly speke in my audience.

‘I wolde lyve in pees, if that I might;
Wherfor I am disposid outrely,
As I his suster servede by night,

¹ You may be sure.—See *ante*, p. 297, note 4

Right so thynk I to serve him prively.
This warn I you, that ye not sodeinly
Out of your self for no thing schuld outrage:
Beth pacient, and therof I yow pray.'

'I have,' quod sche, 'sayd thus and ever schal,
I wol no thing, ne nil no thing certayn,
But as yow list; nought greveth me at al,
Though that my doughter and my sone be slayn
At your comaundement; this is to sayne,
I have not had no part of children twayne,
But first syknes, and after wo and payne.

'Ye ben oure lord, doth with your owne thing
Right as yow list, axith no red of me;
For as I left at hom al my clothing,
Whan I first com to yow, right so,' quod sche,
'Left I my wille and my liberte,
And took your clothing; wherfor I yow preye,
Doth youre plesaunce, I wil youre lust obeye.

'And certes, if I hadde prescience
Your wil to knowe, er ye youre lust me tolde,
I wold it doon withoute negligence.
But now I wot your lust, and what ye wolde,
Al your plesaunce ferm and stable I holde,
For wist I that my deth wold doon yow ease,
Right gladly wold I deye, yow to please.

'Deth may make no comparisoun
Unto your love.' And whan this marquys say
The constance of his wyf, he cast adoun
His eyghen tuo, and wondrith that sche may
In pacience suffre as this array;
And forth he goth with drery countenaunce,
But to his hert it was ful gret plesaunce.

This ugly sergeaunt in the same wise
That he hir doughter fette, right so he,
Or worse, if men worse can devyse,
Hath hent hir sone, that ful was of beaute.
And ever in oon so pacient was sche,

That sche no cheere made of hevynesse,
But kist hir sone, and after gan him blesse.

Save this sche prayed him, if that he mighte,
Her litel sone he wold in eorthe grave,
His tendre lymes, delicate to sight,
From foules and from bestes him to save.
But sche noon answer of him mighte have.
He went his way, as him no thing ne rought,
But to Boloyne he tenderly it brought.

This marquis wondreth ever the lenger the more
Upon hir pacience, and if that he
Ne hadde sothly knowen therbifore,
That parfytyl hir children loved sche,
He wold have wend that of some subtilte
And of malice, or of cruel corrage,
That sche had suffred this with sad visage.

But wel he knew, that, next himself, certayn
Sche loved hir children best in every wise.
But now of wommen wold I aske fayn,
If these assayes mighten not suffice?
What couthe a stourdy housebonde more devyse
To prove hir wyfhode and her stedefastnesse,
And he contynuyng ever in stourdynesse?

But ther ben folk of such condicioun,
That, whan they have a certeyn purpos take,
Thay can nought stynt of her entencioun,
But, right as thay were bounden to a stake,
Thay wil not of her firste purpos slake;
Right so this marquys fullich hath purposed
To tempt his wyf, as he was first disposed.

He wayteth, if by word or countenance
That sche to him was chaunged of corage.
But never couthe he fynde variaunce,
Sche was ay oon in hert and in visage;
And ay the ferther that sche was in age,
The more trewe, if that were possible,
Sche was to him, and more penyble.

For which it semyd this, that of hem tuo
 Ther nas but oo wil; for as Walter lest,
 The same plesaunce was hir lust also;
 And, God be thanked, al fel for the best.
 Sche schewed wel, for no worldly unrest
 A wyf, as of hir self, no thing ne scholde
 Wylne in effect, but as hir housbond wolde.

The slaunder of Walter ofte and wyde spradde,
 That of a cruel hert he wikkedly,
 For he a pore womman weddid hadde,
 Hath morthrid bothe his children prively;
 Such murmur was among hem comunly.
 No wonder is; for to the peples eere
 Ther com no word, but that thay morthrid were.

For which, wher as his peple therbyfore
 Had loved him wel, the slaunder of his diffame
 Made hem that thay him hatede therfore;
 To ben a morderer is an hateful name.
 But natheles, for earnest or for game,
 He of his cruel purpos nolde stente,
 To tempt his wyf was set al his entente.

Whan that his doughter twelf yer was of age,
 He to the court of Rome, in suche wise
 Enformed of his wille, sent his message,
 Comaundyng hem, such bulles to devyse,
 As to his cruel purpos may suffise,
 How that the pope, as for his peples reste,
 Bad him to wedde another, if him leste.

I say, he bad, thay schulde countretete
 The popes bulles, makyng mencionioun
 That he hath leve his firste wyf to lete,
 As by the popes dispensacioun,
 To stynte rancour and discencioun
 Bitwix his peple and him; thus sayd the bulle,
 The which thay han publisshid atte fulle.

The rude poepel, as it no wonder is,
 Wende ful wel that it had be right so.
 But whan these tydynges come to Grisildis,

I deeme that hir herte was ful wo ;
 But sche y-like sad for evermo
 Disposid was, this humble creature,
 Thadversite of fortun al tendure ;

Abydyng ever his lust and his plesaunce,
 To whom that sche was give, hert and al,
 As to hir verray worldly suffisaunce.
 But schortly if I this story telle schal,
 This marquys writen hath in special
 A letter, in which he schewith his entent,
 And secrely he to Boloynes it sent.

To therl of Panyk, which that hadde tho
 Weddid his suster, prayd he specially
 To brynge hom agein his children tuo
 In honourable estaat al openly.
 But oon thing he him prayde outerly,
 That he to no wight, though men wold enquire.
 Schuld not tellen whos children thay were,

But say the mayde schuld i-weddid be
 Unto the markys of Saluce anoon.
 And as this eorl was prayd, so dede he,
 For at day set he on his way is goon
 Toward Saluce, and lordes many oon
 In riche array, this mayden for to guyde,
 Her yonge brother rydyng by hir syde.

Arrayed was toward hir mariage
 This freisshe may al ful of gemmes clere ;
 Hir brother, which that seven yer was of age,
 Arrayed eek ful freissh in his manere ;
 And thus in gret noblesse and with glad chere
 Toward Saluces schapyng her journey,
 Fro day to day thay ryden in her way.

INCIPIT PARS QUINTA.

AMONG al this, after his wikked usage,
 This marquis yit his wif to tempte more
 To the uttrest proof of hir corrage,

Fully to han experiens and lore,
 If that sche were as stedefast as byfore,
 He on a day in open audience
 Ful boystrously hath sayd hir this sentence.

‘ Certes, Grisildes, I had y-nough plesaunce
 To have yow to my wif, for your goodnesse,
 And for youre trouthe, and for your obeissaunce,
 Nought for your lignage, ne for your richesse;
 But now know I in verray sothfastnesse,
 That in gret lordschip, if I wel avyse,
 Ther is gret servitude¹ in sondry wyse;

I may not do, as every ploughman may;
 My poeple me constreignith for to take
 Another wyf, and cryen day by day;
 And eek the pope,² rancour for to slake,
 Consentith it, that dar I undertake;
 And trewely, thus moche I wol yow say,
 My newe wif is comyng by the way.

‘ Be strong of hert, and voyde anoon hir place,
 And thilke dower that ye broughten me
 Tak it agayn, I graunt it of my grace.
 Retourneth to your fadres hous,’ quod he,
 ‘ No man may alway have prosperite.
 With even hert I rede yow endure
 The strok of fortune or of adventure.’

And sche agayn answerd in pacience:
 ‘ My lord,’ quod sche, ‘ I wot, and wist alway,
 How that betwixe your magnificence
 And my poverte no wight can ne may
 Make comparisoun, it is no nay;
 I ne held me never digne in no manere
 To ben your wyf, ne yit your chamberere.

‘ And in this hous, ther ye me lady made,
 (The highe God take I for my witnesse,

¹ Harl. MS., *servise*.

² The Harl. MS. for *pope* reads *popes*; the meaning evidently is, the Pope, in order to slake or allay rancour, consents, &c.

And al so wisly he my soule glade)
I never huld me lady ne maistresse,
But humble servaunt to your worthinesse,
And ever schal, whil that my lyf may dure,
Aboven every worldly creature.

‘That ye so longe of your benignite
Han holden me in honour and nobleye,
Wher as I was not worthy for to be,
That thonk I God and yow, to whom I preye
For-yeld it yow, ther is no more to seye.
Unto my fader gladly wil I wende,
And with him duelle unto my lyves ende.

‘Ther I was fostred as a child ful smal,
Til I be deed my lyf ther wil I lede,
A widow clene in body, hert, and al;
For sith I gaf to yow my maydenhede,
And am your trewe wyf, it is no drede,
God schilde such a lordes wyf to take
Another man to housbond or to make.

‘And of your newe wif, God of his grace
So graunte yow wele and prosperite;
For I wol gladly yelden hir my place,
In which that I was blisful wont to be.
For sith it liketh yow, my lord,’ quod sche,
‘That whilom were al myn hertes reste,
That I schal gon, I wil go whan yow leste.

‘But ther as ye profre me such dowayre
As I ferst brought, it is wel in my mynde,
It were my wrecchid clothes, no thing faire,
The whiche to me were hard now for to fynde.
O goode God! how gentil and how kynde
Ye semed by your speche and your visage,
That day that maked was our mariage!

‘But soth is sayd, algate I fynd it trewe,
For in effect it proved is on me,
Love is nought old as whan that it is newe.
But certes, lord, for noon adversite
To deyen in the caas, it schal not be

That ever in word or werk I schal repente
That I yow gaf myn hert in hol entente.

‘My lord, ye wot that in my fadres place
Ye dede me strippe out of my pore wede,
And richely me cladden of your grace;
To yow brought I nought elles out of drede,
But faith, and nakednesse,¹ and maydenhede;
And her agayn my clothyng I restore,
And eek my weddyng ryng for evermore.

‘The remenant of your jewels redy be
Within your chambur dar I sauflly sayn.²
Naked out of my fadres hous,’ quod sche,
‘I com, and naked moot I torne agayn.
Al your pleisauns wold I fulfille fayn;
But yit I hope it be not youre entent,
That I smocles out of your paleys went.

‘Ye couthe not doon so dishonest a thing,
That thilke wombe, in which your children leye,
Schulde byforn the poeple, in my walkyng,
Be seye al bare: wherfore I yow pray
Let me not lik a worm go by the way;
Remembre yow, myn oughne lord so deere,
I was your wyf, though I unworthy were.

‘Wherfor, in guerdoun of my maydenhede,
Which that I brought and nought agayn I bere,
As vouchethsauf to geve me to my meede
But such a smok as I was wont to were,
That I therwith may wrye the wombe of here
That was your wif; and here take I my leve
Of yow, myn oughne lord, lest I yow greve.’

‘The smok,’ quod he, ‘that thou hast on thy bak,
Let it be stille, and ber it forth with the.’
But wel unnethes thilke word he spak,

¹ Harl. MS., *mekeness*. Petrarch's words are—‘*Neque omnino alia mihi dos fuit quam fides et nuditas.*’

² The Harl. MS., evidently by mistake, reads—

‘*Within your chamber dore dar,*’ &c.

But went his way for routhe and for pite.
Byforn the folk hirselvesen strippith sche,
And in hir smok, with heed and foot al bare,
Toward hir fader house forth is sche fare.

The folk hir folwen wepyng in hir weye,
And fortune ay thay cursen as thay goon;
But sche fro wepyng kept hir eyen dreye,
Ne in this tyme word ne spak sche noon.
Hir fader, that this tyding herd anoon,
Cursed the day and tyme, that nature
Schoop him to ben a lyves creature.

For oute of doute this olde pore man
Was ever in suspect of hir mariage;
For ever he deemed, sith that it bigan,
That whan the lord fulfilled had his corrage,
Him wolde think that it were disparage
To his estate, so lowe for to light,
And voyden hire as sone as ever he might.

Agayns his doughter hastily goth he;
For he by noyse of folk knew hir comyng;
And with hir olde cote, as it might be,
He covered hir ful sorwfully wepynge;
But on hir body might he it nought bringe,
For rude was the cloth, and mor of age
By dayes fele¹ than at hir mariage.

Thus with hir fader for a certeyn space
Dwellith this flour of wifly pacience,
That neyther by her wordes ne by hir face,
Byforn the folk, nor eek in her absence,
Ne schewed sche that hir was doon offence,
Ne of hir highe astaat no remembraunce
Ne hadde sche, as by hir countenaunce.

No wonder is, for in hir gret estate
Hir gost was ever in playn humilite;
Ne tender mouth, noon herte delicate,

¹ *Fele* is the Anglo-Saxon for many; modern German, *viel*, pronounced *fiel*.

Ne pompe, ne semblant of realte ;
 But ful of pacient benignite,
 Discrete, and prideles, ay honorable,
 And to hir housbond ever meke and stable.

Men speke of Job, and most for his humblesse,
 As clerkes, whan hem lust, can wel endite,
 Namely of men, but as in sothfastnesse,
 Though clerkes prayse wommen but a lite,
 Ther can no man in humblesse him acquyte
 As wommen can, ne can be half so trewe
 As wommen ben, but it be falle of newe.

PARS SEXTA.¹

FRO Boloynes is this erl of Panik y-come,
 Of which the fame up-sprong to more and lasse,
 And to the poeples eeres alle and some
 Was couth eek, that a newe marquisesse
 He with him brought, in such pomp and richesse,
 That never was ther seyn with mannes ye
 So noble array in al West Lombardye.

The marquys, which that schoop and knew al this,
 Er that this erl was come, sent his message
 For thilke² cely pore Grisildis ;
 And sche with humble hert and glad³ visage,
 Not with no swollen hert in hir corrage,
 Cam at his hest, and on hir knees hir sette,
 And reverently and wyfly sche him grette.

‘Grisild,’ quod he, ‘my wil is outrely,
 This mayden, that schal weddid be to me,
 Receyved be to morwe as really
 As it possible is in myn hous to be ;
 And eek that every wight in his degre

¹ Harl. MS. has no division here.

The final *e* has been added to *thilk*, as more correct grammatically, and necessary for the metre.

³ Harl. MS., *good*.

Have his estaat in sittying and servyse,
In high plesaunce, as I can devyse.

'I have no womman suffisant certeyne
The chambres for tarray in ordinance
After my lust, and therfor wold I feyne,
That thin were al such maner governaunce;
Thow knowest eek of al my plesaunce;
Though thyn array be badde, and ille byseye,
Do thou thy dever atte leste weye.'

'Nought oonly, lord, that I am glad,' quod sche,
'To don your lust, but I desire also
Yow for to serve and plese in my degre,
Withoute feynting,¹ and schal evermo;
Ne never for no wele, ne for no wo,
Ne schal the gost withinne myn herte stente
To love yow best with al my trewe entent.'

And with that word sche gan the hous to dight,
And tables for to sette, and beddes make,
And peyned hir to doon al that sche might,
Preying the chamberers for Goddes sake
To hasten hem, and faste swepe and schake,
And sche the moste servisable of alle
Hath every chamber arrayed, and his halle.

Abouten undern gan this lord² alight,
That with him brought these noble children tweye;
For which the peple ran to se that sight
Of her array, so richely biseye.
And than at erst amonges hem thay seye,
That Walter was no fool, though that him lest
To chaunge his wyf; for it was for the best.

For sche is fairer, as thay demen alle,
Than is Grisild, and more tender of age,
And fairer fruyt bitwen hem schulde falle,
And more plesaunt for hir high lynage,
Hir brother eek so fair was of visage,

¹ Harl. MS. reads *feynnyng*, evidently by mistake; Petrarch's words are
'Neque in hoc unquam *fatigabor*'

² Mr. Wright substitutes *erl*, as a more exact translation of Petrarch's
word, *comes*.

That hem to seen the peple hath caught plesaunce,
Comending now the marquis governaunce.

O stormy poeple, unsad and ever untrewe,
And undiscret, and chaunging as a fane,
Delytyng¹ ever in rombel that is newe,
For lik the moone ay wax ye and wane;
Ay ful of clappyng, dere y-nough a jane,²
Youre doom is fals, your constaunce yvel previth,
A ful gret fool is he that on yow leevith.

Thus sayde saad folke in that citee,
Whan that the poeple gased up and down;
For thay were glad right for the novelte,
To have a newe lady of her toun.
No more of this now make I mencioune,
But to Grisildes agayn wol I me dresse,
And telle hir constance, and her busynesse.

Ful busy was Grisild in every thing,
That to the feste was appertinent;
Right nought was sche abaissht of hir clothing,
Though it were ruyde, and som del eek to-rent,
But with glad cheer to the gate is sche went,
With other folk, to griete the marquisesse,
And after that doth forth her busynesse.

With so glad chier his gestes sche receyveth,
And so connyngly everich in his degre,
That no defaute no man aperceyveth,
But ay thay wondren what sche might be,
That in so pover array was for to se,
And couthe such honour and reverence,
And worthily thay prayse hir prudence.

In all this mene while sche ne stent
This mayde and eek hir brother to comende
With al hir hert in ful buxom³ entent,

¹ Harl. MS., *desynnyng*.

² *Jane* is a small coin of Genoa (Janua). The meaning is, Your praise is dear enough at a farthing.

³ *Buxom*. The reading of the Harl. MS. has been restored, Mr. Wright having changed it to *benigne*, without, apparently, sufficient reason, *buxom* meaning obedient. [But most MSS. read *benigne*.—W. W. S.]

So wel, that no man couthe hir pris amende;
 But atte last whan that these lordes wende
 To sitte down to mete, he gan to calle
 Grisild, as sche was busy in his halle.

‘Grisyld,’ quod he, as it were in his play,
 ‘How likith the my wif and hir beaute?’
 ‘Right wel, my lord,’ quod sche, ‘for in good fay,
 A fairer saugh I never noon than sche.
 I pray to God give hir prosperite;
 And so hope I, that he wol to yow sende
 Plesaunce y-nough unto your lyves ende.

‘On thing warn I yow and biseke also,
 That ye ne prike with no tormentynge
 This tendre mayden, as ye have do mo;¹
 For sche is fostrid in hir norischinge
 More tendrely, and to my supposynge
 Sche couthe not adversite endure,
 As couthe a pore fostrid creature.’

And whan this Walter saugh hir pacience,
 Hir glade cheer, and no malice at al,
 And he so oft had doon to hir offence,
 And sche ay sad and constant as a wal,
 Continuyng ever hir innocence over al,
 This sturdy marquys gan his herte dresse
 To rewen upon hir wyfly stedefastnesse.

‘This is y-nough, Grisilde myn,’ quod he,
 ‘Be now no more agast, ne yvel apayed.
 I have thy faith and thy benignite,
 As wel as ever womman was, assayed
 In gret estate, and propreliche arrayed;
 Now knowe I, dere wyf, thy stedefastnesse;
 And hir in armes took, and gan hir kesse.

And sche for wonder took of it no keepe;
 Sche herde not what thing he to hir sayde,
 Sche ferd as sche had stert out of a sleepe,

¹ [The word ‘mo’ means ‘others,’ a delicate way of saying ‘another.’ The Italian text has *altra*, and the Latin has *alteram*. Chaucer follows the latter throughout.—W. W. S.]

Til sche out of hir masidnesse abrayde.

‘Grisild,’ quod he, ‘by God that for us deyde,
Thou art my wyf, ne noon other I have,
Ne never had, as God my soule save.

‘This is my doughter, which thou hast supposed
To be my wif; that other faithfully
Schal be myn heir, as I have ay purposed;
Thow bar hem in thy body trewely.
At Boloyne have I kept him prively;
Tak hem agayn, for now maistow not seye,
That thou hast lorn noon of thy children tweye.

‘And folk, that other weyes han seyde of me,
I warn hem wel, that I have doon this deede
For no malice, ne for no cruelte,
But for tassaye in the thy wommanhede;
And not to slen my children, (God forbede!)
But for to kepe hem prively and stille,
Til I thy purpos knewe and al thy wil.’

Whan sche this herd, aswoned doun sche fallith
For pitous joy, and after her swownyng
Sche bothe hir yonge children to hir callith,
And in hir armes pitously wepyng
Embraseth hem, and tenderly kysyng,
Ful lik a moder with hir salte teris
Sche bathis bothe hir visage and hir eeris.

O, such a pitous thing it was to see
Her swownyng, and hir humble vois to heere!
‘*Graunt mercy*, lord, God thank it yow,’ quod sche,
‘That ye han saved me my children deere.’¹
Now rek I never to be deed right heere,
Sith I stond in your love and in your grace,
No fors of deth, ne whan my spirit pace.

‘O tender deere yonge children myne,
Youre woful moder wende stedefastly,
That cruel houndes or som foul vermyne

¹ Harl. MS.—

‘*That ye han kept my children so deere.*’

Had eten yow; but God of his mercy,
And your benigne fader tenderly
Hath doon yow kepe.' And in that same stounde
Al sodeinly sche swapped down to grounde.

And in hir swough so sadly holdith sche
Hir children tuo, whan sche gan hem tembrace,
That with gret sleight and gret difficulte
The children from her arm they gonne arace.
O! many a teer on many a pitous face
Doun ran of hem that stoodden hir bisyde,
Unnethe aboute hir mighte thay abyde.

Waltier hir gladith, and hir sorwe slakith,
Sche rysith up abaisshed from hir traunce,
And every wight hir joy and feste makith,
Til sche hath caught agayn her continuaunce.
Wauter hir doth so faithfully plesaunce,
That it was daynte to see the cheere
Bitwix hem tuo, now thay be met in feere.

These ladys, whan that thay her tyme say,
Han taken hir, and into chambre goon,
And strippe hir out of hir rude array,
And in a cloth of gold that brighte schon,
With a coroun of many a riche stoon
Upon hir heed, thay into halle hir brought;
And ther sche was honoured as hir ought.

Thus hath this pitous day a blisful ende;
For every man and womman doth his might
This day in mirth and revel to despende,
Til on the welken schon the sterres bright;
For more solempne in every mannes sight
This feste was, and gretter of costage,
Than was the revel of hir mariage.

Ful many a yer in heigh prosperite
Lyven these tuo in concord and in rest,
And richeliche his doughter married he
Unto a lord, on of the worthiest
Of al Ytaile, and thanne in pees and rest

His wyves fader in his court he kepith,
Til that the soule out of his body crepith.

His sone succedith in his heritage,
In rest and pees, after his fader day;
And fortunat was eek in mariage,
Al put he not his wyf in gret assay.
This world is not so strong, it is no nay,
As it hath ben in olde tymes yore,
And herknith, what this auctor saith therfore.

This story is sayd, not for that wyves scholde
Folwe Grisild, as in humilite,
For it were importable, though thay wolde;
But for that every wight in his degre
Schulde be constant in adversite.

As was Grisild, therfore Petrark writeth
This story, which with high stile he enditeth.

For sith¹ a womman was so pacient
Unto a mortal man, wel more us oughte
Receyven al in gre that God us sent.
For gret skil is he prove that he wroughte,
But he ne temptith no man that he boughte,²
As saith seint Jame, if ye his pistil rede;
He provith folk al day, it is no drede;

And suffrith us, as for our exercise,
With scharpe scourges of adversite
Ful ofte to be bete in sondry wise;
Nought for to knowe oure wille, for certes he,
Er we were born, knew al our frelte;
And for oure best is al his governaunce;
Let us thanne lyve in vertuous suffraunce.

But oo word, lordes, herkneth er I go:
It were ful hard to fynde now a dayes
As Grisildes in al a toun thre or tuo;
For if that thay were put so such assayes,
The gold of hem hath now so badde alayes

¹ Harl. MS., *swich*. The reading in 'he text is that of the Lansd. MS.

² James i. 13.

With bras, that though the coyn be fair at ye,
It wolde rather brest in tuo than plyc.

For which hecr, for the wyves love of Bathe,—
Whos lyf and alle of hir secte God meyntene
In high maistry, and elles were it scathe,—
I wil with lusty herte freisch and grene,
Say yow a song to glade yow, I wene;
And lat us stynt of earnestful matiere.
Herknith my song, that saith in this manere.

L'ENVOYE DE CHAUCER.¹

GRISILD is deed, and eek hir pacience,
And bothe at oones buried in Itayle;
For whiche I crye in open audience,
No weddid man so hardy be to assayle
His wyves pacience, in hope to fynde
Grisildes, for in certeyn he schal fayle.

O noble wyves, ful of heigh prudence,
Let noon humilite your tonges nayle;
Ne lat no clerk have cause or diligence
To write of yow a story of such mervayle,
As of Grisildes pacient and kynde,
Lest Chichivache² yow swolwe in hir entraille.

Folwith ecco, that holdith no silence,
But ever answereth at the countretayle;

¹ In the *Envoye*, Chaucer seems to indemnify himself for his patient adoption of Petrarch in the foregoing tale, by giving the reins to his characteristic wit and irony.

² The allusion is to the subject of an old ballad, still preserved in the MS. Harl., 2251, fol. 270, b. It is a kind of Pageant, in which two beasts are introduced, called *Bycorne* and *Chichevache*. The former is supposed to feed upon obedient husbands, and the latter upon patient wives; and the humour of the piece consists in representing Bycorne as pampered with a superfluity of food, and Chichevache as half-starved. The name Chichevache is French, *vacca parca*.—T.

Tyrwhitt is in error in calling the ballad a Pageant. It is a set of verses intended to be inscribed on a tapestry representing the two beasts. There is a broadside woodcut of them in the Society of Antiquaries' Library. For a poem by Lydgate on this subject, see Lydgate's *Minor Poems*, edited by Mr. Halliwell for the Percy Society.

Beth nought bydaffed for your innocence,
 But scharply tak on yow the governayle;
 Empryntith wel this lessoun on your mynde,
 For comun profyt, sith it may avayle.

Ye archewyves, stondith at defens,
 Syn ye ben strong, as is a greet chamayle,
 Ne suffre not that men yow don offens.
 And sclendre wyves, felle as in batayle,
 Beth egre as is a tyger yond in Inde;
 Ay clappith as a mylle, I yow counsaile.

Ne drede hem not, do hem no reverence,
 For though thin housbond armed be in mayle,
 The arwes of thy crabbid eloquence¹
 Schal perse his brest, and eek his adventayle:
 In gelousy I rede eek thou him bynde,
 And thou schalt make him couche as doth a quayle.

If thou be fair, ther folk ben in præsence
 Schew thou thy visage and thin apparaile;
 If thou be foul, be fre of thy despense,
 To gete the frendes do ay thy travayle;
 Be ay of chier as light as lef on lynde,
 And let hem care and wepe, and wryng and wayle.²

THE PROLOGE OF THE MARCHAUNDES TALE.

‘**W**EPLYNG and wailynge, care and other sorwe
 I knowe y-nough, bothe on even and on morwe,
 Quod the Marchaund, ‘and so doon other mo,
 That weddin ben; I trowe that it be so,

¹ These three lines possess a force of diction that will remind the reader of Dryden. [‘And eek his adventayle’ means ‘and even his helmet,’ i.e. will bruise his head, however securely protected.—W. W. S.]

² Tyrwhitt states that in some MSS. the following stanza is interposed:—

‘This worthy clerk, when ended was his tale,
 Oure hoste said and swore by cockes bones,
 Me were lever than a barrel of ale

For wel I woot it fareth so with me.
 I have a wyf, the worste that may be,
 For though the feend to hir y-coupled were,
 Sche wold him overmacche I dar wel swere.
 What schuld I yow reherse in special
 Hir high malice? sche is a schrewe at al.
 Ther is a long and a large difference
 Betwix Grisildes grete pacience,
 And of my wyf the passyng cruelte.
 Were I unbounden, al so mot I the,
 I wolde never eft come in the snare.
 We weddid men lyve in sorwe and care,
 Assay it who so wil, and he schal fynde
 That I say soth, by seint Thomas of Inde,
 As for the more part, I say not alle;
 God schilde that it scholde so byfalle.
 A! good sir host, I have y-weddid be
 Thise monethes tuo, and more not, parde;
 And yit I trowe that he, that al his lyve
 Wyfles hath ben, though that men wold him rive
 Unto the hert, ne couthe in no manere
 Tellen so moche sorwe, as I now heere
 Couthe telle of my wyfes cursednesse.'
 'Now,' quod our ost, 'Marchaunt, so God yow blesse!
 Sin ye so moche knowen of that art,
 Ful hertily tellith us a part.'
 'Gladly,' quod he, 'but of myn oughne sore
 For sory hert I telle may na more.'

My wyf at home had herd this legend ones:
 This is a gentil tale for the nones,
 As to my purpos, wiste ye my wille,
 But thing that wol not be, let it be stille.'

If these lines be Chaucer's, they can be considered only as a fragment of an unfinished prologue which he afterwards cancelled. He has made use of the same thought in the prologue which connects the *Monk's Tale* with the *Tale of Melibeus*. Mr. Wright says that in some MSS. the prologue given in the text is omitted, and in others a different prologue is given, and the *Clerkes Tale* is in some followed by the *Frankelynes*. The prologue and arrangement of the Harl. MS., as given in the text, are, however, evidently the genuine ones.

THE MARCHAUNDES TALE.

[THE earliest form in which this tale has been preserved is a Latin fable by Adolphus, written about 1315, containing the adventure of the pear-tree. There is also a Latin prose version in the Appendix to *Æsop's Fables*, printed in the 15th century. Mr. Wright has republished both these pieces in his *Latin Stories*. Chaucer, in all probability, derived the subject from a French fabliau older than either; enriching his original, as usual, with his own wit, and with those graphic pictures of manners which confer upon this tale a particular value. Pope's modern version, *January and May*, is familiar to all readers. The introduction of Pluto and Proserpine as the King and Queen of 'Faerie,' Tyrwhitt believes to belong exclusively to Chaucer. On this point generally, see page 335, notes 1 and 2.]

WHILOM ther was dwellyng in Lombardy
 A worthy knight, that born was of Pavy,
 In which he lyved in gret prosperite;
 And fourty yer a wifes man was he,
 And folwed ay his bodily delyt
 On wommen, ther as was his appetyt,
 As doon these fooles that ben seculere.¹
 And whan that he was passed sixty yere,²
 Were it for holyness or for dotage,
 I can not say, but such a gret corrage
 Hadde this knight to ben a weddid man,
 That day and night he doth al that he can
 Taspye wher that he mighte weddid be;
 Praying our Lord to graunte him, that he

¹ This is, perhaps, ironical, uttered with a sly glance at the monk, frere, and other priests who were present; otherwise the propriety of the expression in the mouth of the merchant, himself a secular person, is not apparent.

² The reading in the text is taken from the Lansd. MS., in preference to that of the Harl. MS., which gives the age as xl., probably a transposition of lx. The knight, it seems, was wifeless for forty years after the usual time of marriage—about twenty.

Might oones knowen of that blisful lif
 That is bitwix an housbond and his wyf,
 And for to lyve under that holy bond
 With which God first man to womman bond.
 'Noon other lif,' sayd he, 'is worth a bene;
 For wedlok is so holy and so clene,
 That in this world it is a paradis.'
 Thus sayd this olde knight, that was so wys.
 And certainly, as soth as God is king,
 To take a wyf it¹ is a glorious thing,
 And namely whan a man is old and hoor,
 Than is a wyf the fruyt of his tresor;²
 Than schuld he take a yong wif and a fair,
 On which he might engendre him an hair,
 And lede his lyf in mirthe and solace,
 Wheras these bachileres synge allas,
 Whan that thay fynde eny adversite
 In love, which is but childes vanite.
 And trewely it sit wel to be so,
 That bachilers have ofte peyne and wo;
 On brutil ground thay bulde, and brutelnesse
 Thay fynde, whan thay wene sikernesse;
 Thay lyve but as a brid other as a best,
 In liberte and under noon arrest;
 Ther as a weddid man, in his estate,
 Lyvith his lif blisful³ and ordinate,
 Under the yok of mariage i-bounde;
 Wel may his herte in joye and blisse abounde;
 For who can be so buxom as a wyf?
 Who is so trewe and eek so ententyf
 To kepe him, seek and hool, as is his make?
 For wele or woo sche wol him not forsake.

¹ It is adopted from Tyrwhitt, being necessary for the metre.

² All the knight's reasons for marriage are purposely made ridiculous; for no one would desire to have a wife who was the 'fruit of his treasure'—that is to say, who had married him for money.

³ Harl. MS., *busily*.

Sche is not wery him to love and serve,
 Theigh that he lay bedred til that he sterue.
 And yet som clerkes seyn it is not so,
 Of whiche Theofrast is oon of tho.
 What fors though Theofrast liste lye?
 Ne take no wif, quod he, for housbondrye,¹
 As for to spare in houshold thy dispense;
 A trewe servaunt doth more diligence
 Thy good to kepe, than thin oughne wif,
 For sche wol clayme half part in al hir lif.
 And if that thou be seek, so God me save,
 Thyne verray frendes or a trewe knave
 Wol kepe the bet than sche that waytith ay
 After thy good, and hath doon many a day.
 And if that thou take a wif, be war
 Of oon peril, which declare I ne dar.²

This entent, and an hundrid sithe wors,
 Writith this man, ther God his bones curs.
 But take no keep of al such vanite;
 Deffy Theofrast, and herkne me.
 A wyf is Goddes gifte verrayly;
 Al other maner giftes hardily,
 As landes, rentes, pasture, or comune,
 Or other moebilis, ben giftes of fortune,
 That passen as a schadow on a wal.
 But dred not, if I playnly telle schal,
 A wyf wil last and in thin hous endure,
 Wel lenger than the lust peradventure.
 Mariage is a ful gret sacrament;³
 He which hath no wif I hold him schent;

¹ What follows, to the line beginning 'After thy good,' &c., is taken from Theophrastus, *Liber Aureolus*, quoted by Jerome.

² Of these two lines there are many versions in the different MSS. Tyrwhitt omits them altogether, and thinks that, even if genuine, they were intended as the opening of a new argument, which Chaucer afterwards cancelled.

³ Ephes. v. 32. The difference between our version and the Vulgate, which Chaucer follows, arises from the ambiguity of the original word, *μυστηριον*, which is translated by the Latin *sacramentum*.

He lyveth helples, and is al desolate
 (I speke of folk in secular¹ estate).
 And herken why, I say not this for nought,
 That womman is for mannes help i-wrought.
 The heighe God, whan he had Adam maked,
 And saugh him al aloone body naked,
 God of his grete goodnes sayde thanne,
 Let us now make an helpe to this manne
 Lyk to himself; and than he made Eve.
 Her may ye see, and here may ye preve,
 That wyf is mannes help and his comfort,
 His paradis terrestre and his desport.
 So buxom and so vertuous is sche,
 Thay mosten neede lyve in unite;
 O fleisch thay ben, and on blood, as I gesse,
 Have but oon hert in wele and in distresse.

A wyf? a! seinte Mary, *benedicite*,
 How might a man have eny adversite
 That hath a wyf? certes I can not say.
 The joye that is betwixen hem tway
 Ther may no tonge telle or herte think.
 If he be pore, sche helpith him to swynk;
 Sche kepith his good, and wastith never a del;
 And al that her housbond list, sche likith it wel;
 Sche saith nought oones nay, whan he saith ye;
 Do this, saith he; al redy, sir, saith sche.

O blisful ordre, o wedlok precious!
 Thou art so mery, and eek so vertuous,
 And so comendid, and approved eek,
 That every man that holt him worth a leek,
 Upon his bare knees ought al his lyf
 Thanken his God, that him hath sent a wif,
 Or pray to God oon him for to sende
 To be with him unto his lyves ende.
 For than his lyf is set in sikernesse;
 He may not be deceyved, as I gesse,

¹ The knight means to say, 'I do not mean to apply this to the clergy, but to the laity—to secular persons.'

So that he worche after his wyfes red;
 Than may be boldely bere up his heed,
 Thay ben so trewe, and also so wyse,
 For whiche, if thou wolt do as the wyse,
 Do alway so, as womman wol the rede.
 Lo how that Jacob, as the clerkes rede,
 By good counsil of his moder Rebecke,
 Band the kydes skyn about his nekke;
 For which his fader benesoun he wan.¹
 Lo Judith, as the story telle can,
 By wys counseil sche Goddes poepel kept,
 And slough him Oliphernus whil he slept.

Lo Abygaille,² by good counsil how sche
 Savyd hir housbond Nabal,³ whan that he
 Schold han ben slayn. And loke, Hester also⁴
 By good counseil delivered out of wo
 The poeple of God, and made him Mardoche
 Of Assuere enhaunsed for to be.
 Ther nys no thing in gre superlatif
 (As saith Senec)⁵ above an humble wyf.
 Suffre thy wyves tonge, as Catoun⁶ byt,
 Sche schal comaunde, and thou schalt suffre it.
 And yit sche wil obeye of curtesye.

A wif is keper of thin housbondrye:
 Wel may the sike man wayle and wepe,
 Ther as ther is no wyf the hous to kepe.
 I warne the, if wisely thou wilt wirche,
 Love wel thy wyf, as Crist loveth his chirche;⁷
 If thou lovest thiself, thou lovest thy wyf.
 No man hatith his fleissch, but in his lif

¹ Gen. xxvii.

² 1 Sam. xv.

³ Harl. MS., *Nacab*, a mere clerical error.

⁴ Harl. MS., for *Hester also*, reads *after also*, and for *Mardoche*, *Mardoche*; but these are obviously clerical errors.

⁵ Tyrwhitt informs us that in the margin of MS. C. i., is given this quotation from Seneca:—‘Sicut nihil est superius benignâ conjuge, ita nihil est crudelius infestâ muliere.’

⁶ The *nom de guerre* of the compiler of the *Disticha*, a well-known mediæval collection of aphorisms. The passage is given in the margin of MS. C. i.:—‘Uxoris linguam, si frugi est, ferre memento.’

⁷ Ephes. v.

He fostrith it, and therfore warne I the
 Cherissh thy wyf, or thou schalt never the.
 Housbond and wif, what so men jape or pleye,
 Of worldly folk holden the righte weye;
 Thay ben so knyht, ther may noon harm bytyde,
 And namelichē upon the wyves syde.
 For which this January, of which I tolde,
 Considered hath inwith his dayes olde
 The lusty lif, the vertuous quiete,
 That is in mariage honey-swete.

And for his frendes on a day he sente
 To tellen hem theeffect of his entent.
 With face sad, he hath hem this tale told;
 He sayde, 'Frendes, I am hoor and old,
 And almost (God woot) at my pittes brinke,¹
 Upon my soule som what most I thynke.
 I have my body folily dispendid,
 Blessed be God that it schal be amendid;
 For I wil be certeyn a weddid man,
 And that anoon in al the hast I can,
 Unto som mayde, fair and tender of age.
 I pray yow helpith for my mariage
 Al sodeynly, for I wil not abyde;
 And I wil fonde tespien on my syde,
 To whom I may be weddid hastily.
 But for als moche as ye ben mo than I,
 Ye schul rather such a thing asprien
 Than I, and wher me lust beste to allien.
 But oo thing warne I yow, my frendes deere,
 I wol noon old wyf have in no manere;
 Sche schal not passe sixtene yer certayn.
 Old fisch and young fleisch, that wold I have ful fayn.
 Bet is,' quod he, 'a pyk than a pikerell,
 And bet than olde boef is the tendre vel.
 I wil no womman twenty yer of age,
 It nys but bene-straw and gret forage.

¹ At the brink of my grave.

And eek these olde wydewes (God it woot)
 Thay can so moche craft of Wades¹ boot,
 So moche broken harm whan that hem list,
 That with hem schuld I never lyven in rest.
 For sondry scolis maken subtil clerkes;
 Womman of many a scole² half a clerk is.
 But certeyn, a yong thing may men gye,
 Right as men may warm wax with hondes plye.
 Wherfor I say yow plenerly in a clause,
 I wil noon old wyf han right for that cause.
 For if so were I hadde so meschaunce,
 That I in hir ne couthe have no plesaunce,
 Then schuld I lede my lyf in advoutrie,
 And go streight to the devel whan I dye.
 Ne children schuld I noon upon hir gcten;
 Yet were me lever houndes had me eten,
 Than that myn heritage schulde falle
 In straunge hond; and thus I telle yow alle.
 I doute not, I wot the cause why
 Men scholde wedde; and forthermor woot I,
 Ther spekith many man of mariage,
 That wot nomore of it than wot my page
 For whiche causes man schuld take a wyf.
 If he ne may not chast be by his lif,³
 Take him a wif with gret devocioun,
 Bycause of lawful procreacioun

¹ Tyrwhitt, after quoting Speght's words, 'Concerning Wade and his bote called Guingelot, as also his strange exploits in the same, because the matter is long and fabulous, I passe it over,' adds, 'Tantamne rem tam negligenter?' It is curious that no history of these celebrated adventures has come down to us, though so popular in the middle ages. Mr. Wright says that M. Fr. Michel, in an essay, *Sur Vade*, has collected all that is known of this famous northern hero. He appears to have been a sort of Scandinavian Ulysses, and is, therefore, cited as an example of craft and cunning. See *Troilus and Creseide*, b. iii:—

'He songe, she pleyde, he tolde a tale of Wade.'

² Harl. MS., *skile*.

³ This argument, taken from the old English *Rituale*, is retained in the exhortation prefixed to the marriage service in the Book of Common Prayer.

Of children, to thonour of God above,
 And not oonly for paramour and for love;
 And for thay schulde leccherye eschiewe,
 And yeld oure dettes whan that it is due;
 Or for that ilk man schulde helpen other
 In meschief, as a suster schal the brother,
 And lyve in chastite ful holily.

But, sires, by your leve, that am not I
 For God be thanked, I dar make avaunt,
 I fele my lemys stark and suffisaunt
 To doon al that a man bilongeth unto;
 I wot my selve best what I may do.

‘ Though I be hoor, I fare as doth a tree,
 That blossemith er that the fruyt i-waxe be,
 A blossemy tre is neither drye ne deed;
 I fele me no wher hoor but on myn heed.
 Myn herte and al my lymes ben as greene,
 As laurer thurgh the yeer is for to seene.
 And synnes ye han herd al myn entent,
 I pray yow to my wille ye assent.’

Diverse men diversly him tolde
 Of mariage many ensamples olde;
 Some blamed it, some praised it certayn;
 But atte laste, schortly for to sayn,
 (As alday fallith altercacioun,
 Bitwixe frendes in dispitesoun)
 Ther fel a strif bitwen his bretheren tuo,
 Of which that oon was clepid Placebo,¹
 Justinus sothly cleped was that other.
 Placebo sayde: ‘ O January, brother,
 Ful litel need had ye, my lord so deere,
 Counseil to axe of eny that is heere;
 But that ye ben so ful of sapience,
 That yow ne likith for your heigh prudence
 To wayve fro the word of Salamon.
 This word, said he, unto us everychoon:

¹ This name indicates his complaisance. See *ante*, p. 378, note 1.

Werk al thing by counsail, thus sayd he,
 And thanne schaltow nought repente the.
 But though that Salamon speke such a word,
 Myn owne deere brother and my lord,
 So wisly God bring my soule at rest,¹
 I holde your oughne counseil is the best.
 For, brother myn, of me tak this motif,
 I have now ben a court-man al my lyf,
 And God wot, though that I unworthy be,
 I have standen in ful gret degre
 Abouten lordes in ful high estat;
 Yit had I never with noon of hem debaat,
 I never hem contraried trewely.
 I wot wel that my lord can more than I;
 What that he saith, I hold it ferm and stable,
 I say the same, or elles thing semblable.
 A ful gret fool is eny counselour,
 That servith any lord of high honour,
 That dar presume, or oones thenken it,
 That his counseil schuld passe his lordes wit.
 Nay, lordes ben no fooles by my fay.
 Ye have your self y-spoken heer to day
 So heigh sentens, so holly, and so wel,
 That I consente, and conferme every del
 Your wordes alle, and youre oppinioun.
 By God ther is no man in al this toun
 Ne in Ytaile, couthe better have sayd;
 Crist holdith him of this ful wel apayd.
 And trewely it is an heigh corrage
 Of any man that stopen is in age,
 To take a yong wyf, by my fader kyn;
 Your herte hongith on a joly pyn.
 Doth now in this matier right as yow lest,
 For fynally I hold it for the best.
 Justinus, that ay stille sat and herde,
 Right in this wise he to Placebo answerde.

¹ Harl. MS., *at ese and rest*, which spoils the metre.

'Now, brother myn, be pacient I yow pray,
 Syns ye have sayd, and herknith what I say :
 Senek amonges other wordes wyse
 Saith, that a man aught him wel avyse,
 To whom he giveth his lond or his catel.
 And syns I aught avyse me right wel,
 To whom I give my good away fro me,
 Wel more I aught advised for to be
 To whom I give my body ; for alwey
 I warn yow wel it is no childes pley
 To take a wyf withoute avisement.
 Men most enquire (this is myn assent)
 Wher sche be wys, or sobre, or dronkelewe.
 Or proud, or eny other way a schrewe,
 A chyder, or a wastour of thy good,
 Or riche or pore, or elles man is wood.
 Al be it so, that no man fynde schal
 Noon in this world, that trottith hool in al,¹
 Neyther man, ne best, such as men can devyse.
 But natheles it aught y-nough suffise
 With any wyf, if so were that sche hadde
 Mo goode thewes than hir vices badde ;
 And al this askith leyser to enquire.
 For God woot, I have weped many a tere
 Ful prively, syns I have had a wyf.
 Prayse who so wil a weddid mannes lif,
 Certes I fynd in it but cost and care,
 And observaunce of alle blisses bare.
 And yit, God woot, myn neighebour aboute,
 And namely of wommen many a route,
 Sayn that I have the moste stedefast wyf,
 And eek the meekest oon that berith lyf ;
 But I woot best, wher wryngith me my scho.²
 Ye may for me right as yow liste do.

¹ A metaphor from horses, meaning, No woman is without faults, just as there is no horse which will trot perfectly sound in all respects.

² See *ante*, p. 321, note 4.

Avysith yow, ye ben a man of age,
 How that ye entren into mariage;
 And namly with a yong wif and a fair.
 By him that made water, eorthe, and air,
 The yongest man, that is in al this route,
 Is busy y-nough to bring it wel aboute
 To have his wif alloone, trustith me;
 Ye schul not please hir fully yeres thre,
 This is to say, to doon hir ful plesaunce.
 A wyf axith ful many an observaunce.
 I pray yow that ye be not evel apayd.
 'Wel,' quod this January, 'and hastow sayd?
 Straw for thy Senec, and for thy proverbis!
 I counte nought a panyer ful of herbes
 Of scole termes; wiser men than thow,
 As I have sayd, assenten her right now
 Unto my purpose: Placebo, what say ye?'
 'I say it is a cursed man,' quod he,
 'That lettith matrimoine sicurly.'
 And with that word thay rysen up sodeinly,
 And ben assented fully, that he scholde
 Be weddid whan him lust, and wher he wolde.
 The fantasy and the curious busynesse
 Fro day to day gan in the soule impresse
 Of January aboute his mariage.
 Many a fair schap, and many a fair visage,
 Ther passith thorough his herte night by night.
 As who so took a mirrour polissched bright,
 And set it in a comun market place,
 Than schuld he se many a figure pace
 By his mirrour; and in the same wise
 Gan January in his thought devyse
 Of maydens, which that dwellid him bisyde;
 He wist not where that he might abyde.
 For though that oon have beaute in hir face.
 Another stant so in the poeples grace
 For hir sadness and hir benignite,
 That of the poeple grettest vois hath sche;

And som were riche and hadde badde name.
 But natheles, bitwix earnest and game,
 He atte last appoynted him an oon,
 And let al other fro his herte goon,
 And ehes hir of his oughne auctorite,
 For love is blynd al day, and may not se.
 And whan he was into bedde brought,
 He purtrayed in his hert and in his thought
 Hir freische beaute, and hir age tendre,
 Hir myddel smal, hir armes long and selendre,
 Hir wise governaunce, hir gentillesse,
 Hir wommanly beryng, and hir sadnesse.

And whan that he on hir was eondeseendid,
 Him thought his chois mighte nought be
 amendid:

For whan that he himself coneludid hadde,
 Him thought ech other mannes witte¹ so badde.
 That impossible it were to repplie
 Agayn his choys: this was his fantasie.
 His frendes sent he to, at his instaunce,
 And prayed hem to doon him that plesaunce,
 That hastily thay wolde to him come;
 He wold abrigge her labour alle and some.
 Nedith no more for him to gon ne ryde,
 He was appoynted ther he wold abyde.
 Placebo eam, and eek his frendes soone,
 And althirfirst he bad hem alle a boone,
 That noon of hem noon argumentis make
 Agayn the purpos which that he had take;
 Which purpos was plesaunt to God, sayd he,
 And verray ground of his prosperite.

He sayd, ther was a mayden in that toun,
 Which that of beaute hadde gret renoun,
 Al were it so, sche were of smal degre,
 Suffisith him hir youthe² and hir beaute;

¹ Harl. MS., *wyf*. The reading in the text is from the Lansd. MS

² Harl. MS., *trouthe*.

Which mayde, he sayd, he wold have to his wyf,
 To lede in ease and holinesse his lyf;
 And thanked God, that he might have hir al,
 That no wight with his blisse parten schal;
 And preyed hem to laboure in this necde,
 And schapen that he faile not to spedc.
 For than he sayd, his spirit was at case;
 ‘Than is,’ quod he, ‘no thing may me displease,
 Save oon thing prikkith in my conscience,
 The which I wil reherse in your presence.
 I have herd sayd,’ quod he, ‘ful yore ago,
 Ther may no man have parfyt blisses tuo,
 This is to say, in erthe and eek in hevene.
 For though he kepe him fro the synnes sevene,¹
 And eek from ylk a braunche of thilke tre,
 Yit is ther so parfyt felicite
 And so gret ease and lust in mariage,
 That ever I am agast now in myn age,
 That I schal lede now so mery a lyf,
 So delicat, withoute wo and stryf,
 That I schal have myn heven in erthe heere.
 For sith that verrey heven is bought so deere
 With tribulacioun and gret penaunce,
 How schuld I thanne, that live in such plesaunce
 As alle weddid men doon with her wyves,
 Come to blisse ther Crist eterne on lyve is?
 This is my drede, and ye, my bretheren tweye,
 Assoilith me this questioun, I yow preye.’

Justinus, which that hated his folye,
 Answerd anon right in his japerie;
 And for he wold his longe tale abrigge,
 He wolde noon auctorite alegge,
 But sayde, ‘Sir, so ther be noon obstacle
 Other than this, God of his high miracle,
 And of his mercy may so for yow wirche,
 That er ye have your rightes of holy chirche,

¹ The seven deadly sins, from which all the others branch out as from a stem.

Ye may repente of weddid mannes lyf,
 In which ye sayn ther is no wo ne stryf;
 And ellis God forbede, but he sente
 A weddid man grace him to repente
 Wel ofte, rather than a sengle man.
 And therfor, sire, the beste reed I can,
 Dispaire yow nought, but have in youre memorie,
 Peradventure she may be your purgatorie;
 Sche may be Goddes mene and Goddes whippe;
 Than schal your soule up to heven skippe
 Swyfter than doth an arwe out of a bowe.
 I hope to God herafter you shuln knowe,
 That ther nys noon so gret felicite
 In mariage, ne nevermor schal be,
 That you schal lette of your savacioun,
 So that ye use, as skile is and resoun,
 The lustes of your wyf attemperely,
 And that ye please hir not to amorously;
 And that ye kepe yow eek from other synne.
 My tale is doon, for my witt is thynne.
 Beth not agast hereof, my brother deere,
 But let us waden out of this matiere.
 The wif of Bathe,¹ if ye han understonde,
 Of mariage, which ye han now in honde,
 Declared hath ful wel in litel space;
 Fareth now well, God have yow in his grace.'

And with that word this Justinus and his brother
 Han tak her leve, and ech of hem of other.
 And whan they saugh that it most needis be,
 Thay wroughten so by sleight and wys trete,
 That sche this mayden, which that Mayhus hight,
 As hastily as ever that sche might,
 Schal weddid be unto this Januarie.
 I trow it were to longe yow to tarie,
 If I yow tolde of every scrit and bond,
 By which that sche was feoffed in his lond;

¹ Justinus is here made to speak as if he had actually heard the *Wif of Bathes Tale*, which had been just recited.

Or for to herken of hir riche array.
 But finally y-comen is that day,
 That to the chirche bothe ben thay went,
 For to receyve the holy sacrament.¹
 Forth comth the preost, with stoole² about his necke,
 And bad hir be lik Sarra and Rebecke³
 In wisdom and in trouth of mariage;
 And sayd his orisouns, as is usage,
 And crouched⁴ hem, and bad God schuld hem bles
 And made al secur y-nough with holinesse.
 Thus ben thay weddid with solempnite;
 And atte feste sittith he and sche
 With othir worthy folk upon the deyes.
 Al ful of joy and blis is the paleys,
 And ful of instrumentz, and of vitaile,
 The moste deintevous of al Ytaile.
 Biforn hem stood such instruments of soun,
 That Orpheus, ne of Thebes Amphioune,
 Ne maden never such a melodye.
 At every cours ther cam loud menstralcye,⁵

¹ Either the sacrament of marriage, or the holy eucharist, which was then usually received by the newly married, a custom still enjoined by the English Book of Common Prayer. See rubric after marriage service.

² The stole is a strip of silk, which used formerly to be richly embroidered and fringed at the ends, worn round the neck with the ends hanging down before by priests, and over the left shoulder by deacons, and is supposed to symbolize the 'yoke' of Christ.

³ The exhortation to be like Sarah and Rebecca is retained in the English service.

⁴ He crouched them means he made the sign of the cross over them. Thus, in Skelton's *Colin Clout*, Ryott is represented—

'And by his syde his whynarde, and his pouche,
 The devyll might dance therein for any crouche.'

Here crouche means a piece of money marked with a cross, to which symbol the devil is supposed to have a peculiar antipathy. The form in the *Rituale Romanum* is, 'Ego conjungo vos in matrimonium. In nomine Patris + et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.' The mark means that the priest was to sign them in this form with his hand.

⁵ There is an example of the custom of ushering in the several courses at solemn feasts with music in Dugdale's *Origines Juridicales*, p. 155, where he describes the observances at Christmas in the Inner Temple. At dinner, 'at the first course is served in a fair and large

That never tromped Joab¹ for to heere,
 Ne he Theodomas yit half so cleere
 At Thebes, whan the citee was in doute.
 Bachus the wyn hem schenchith al aboute,
 And Venus laughith upon every wight,
 (For January was bycome hir knight,
 And wolde bothe assayen his corrage
 In liberte and eek in mariage)
 And with hir fuyrbrond in hir hond aboute
 Daunceth bfore the bryde and al the route.
 And certeynly I dar right wel say this,
 Ymeneus, that god of weddyng is,

bore's head, upon a silver platter, *with minstralcye.*' Holinshed (*Chron.* iii. 76) says that in the year 1170, Henry II. 'served his sonne at the table as sewer, bringing up the bore's head [then the principal dish] *with trumpets before it according to the manner.*' In the collection of Christmas Carols, published by Wynkyn de Worde in 1521, is the following specimen of the 'minstralcye' used on such occasions:—

'Caput apri defero
 Reddens laudes Domino.

The bore's head in hand bring I,
 With garlans gay and rosemary;
 I pray you all singe merely,
 Qui estis in convivio.

The bore's head, I understand,
 Is the chefe servyce in the lande,
 Loke, wherever it be fande,
 Servite cum cantico,' &c.

Warton says that this carol, with many variations, was still retained in his time at Queen's Coll., Oxford. In another, contained in the 'Parkington MS.,' a miscellany of the fifteenth century, is a bill of fare, which would puzzle the most accomplished cook of modern times:—

'Hey, hey, hey, hey, the borys hede is armyd gay.

* * * * *

Then commys in the second kowrs with mykylle pryde,
 The crannus, the herrouns, the bitters by ther syde,
 The pertrychys and the powers, the woodcokes and the snyt.
 With hey, hey,' &c.

¹ Joab is David's captain of the host, and is often represented as 'blowing the trumpet,' to call together the army of Judah. Tyrwhitt supposes that Theodamas is a character in some romantic history of Thebes. *He* is prefixed emphatically, as in p. 428, *him* Oliphernus *him* Mardoche.

Seigh never his lif so mery a weddid man.
 Holde thy pees, thow poete Marcian,¹
 That writest us that ilke weddyng merye
 Of hir Philologie and him Mercurie,
 And of the songes that the Muses songe;
 To smal is bothe thy penne and eek thy tonge
 For to describe of this mariage.
 Whan tender youthe hath weddid stoupyng age,
 Ther is such mirth that it may not be write;
 Assaieth it your self, than may ye wyte
 If that I lye or noon in this mateere.
 Mayus, that sit with so benigne a cheere,
 Hir to bihold it seemed fayerye;²
 Queen Esther loked never with such an ye
 On Assuere, so meke a look hath sche;
 I may not yow devyse al hir beaute;
 But thus moche of hir beaute telle I may,
 That sche was lyk the bryghte morw of May,
 Fulfild of alle beaute and plesaunce.

This January is ravyscht in a traunce,
 At every tyme he lokith in hir face,
 But in his hert he gan hir to manace,
 That he that night in armes wold hir streyne
 Harder than ever Paris did Eleyne.
 But natheles yit had he gret pite
 That thilke night offenden hir most he,
 And thought: 'Alas! O tendre creature,
 Now wolde God ye mighte wel endure
 Al my corrage, it is so scharp and keene;
 I am agast ye schul it not susteene.
 For God forbede, that I dede al my might.
 Now wolde God that it were woxe night,
 And that the night wold stonden evermo.
 I wold that al this poeple were ago.'

¹ An African, who lived in the time of Heraclius, and wrote at Rome, among other things, a poem on grammar and the arts, under the name of *De Nuptiis Philologie et Mercurii*.

² It seemed like being in fairy-land.

And fynally he doth al his labour,
 As he best mighte, savyng his honour,
 To hast hem from the mete in subtil wise.

The tyme cam that resoun was to ryse,
 And after that men daunce, and drynke fast,
 And spices al about the hous thay cast,
 And ful of joy and blis is every man,
 Al but a squier, that hight Damyan,
 Which karf to-for the knight ful many a day;
 He was so ravyssht on his lady May,
 That for the verray peyne he was nigh wood:
 Almost he swelt and swowned ther he stood;
 So sore hath Venus hurt him with hir brond,
 As that sche bare it daunsyng in hir hond.
 And to his bed he went him hastily;
 No more of him as at this tyme telle I;
 But ther I lete him now his wo compleyne,
 Til freisshe May wol rewen on his peyne.
 O perilous fuyr, that in the bed-straw bredith!
 O famuler fo, that his service bedith!
 O servaunt traitour, false homly hewe,¹
 Lyk to the nedder in bosom sleighe² untrewre,
 God schild us alle from your acquaintance!
 O January, dronken in plesaunce
 Of mariage, se how thy Damyan,
 Thyn oughne squier and thy borne man,
 Entendith for to do the vilonye;
 God graunte the thin homly fo espye.
 For in this world nys worse pestilence
 Than homly foo, alday in thy presence.

Parfourmed hath the sonne his ark diourne,
 No lenger may the body of him sojourne

¹ Mr. Wright has restored, from the Harl. MS., the true reading given in the text, (corrupted by Tyrwhitt into *O false of holy hewe*.) and explains it thus: *Hew* is from the Anglo-Saxon *hiwa*, a servant; *homly hew* means, therefore, domestic servant.

² *Sleighe* is introduced from the Lansd. MS. to complete the metre.

On thorisonte, as in that latitude;
 Night with his mantel, that is derk and rude,
 Gan oversprede themesperie aboute;
 For which departed is the lusti route
 Fro January, with thank on every side.
 Hoom to her houses lustily thay ryde,
 Wher as they doon her thinges, as hem leste,
 And whan they seigh her tyme thay goon to reste.
 Soone after that this hasty Januarie
 Wold go to bed, he wold no lenger tarie.
 He drinkith ypocras,¹ clarre, and vernage
 Of spices hote, to encrese his corrage;
 And many a letuary had he ful fyn,
 Such as the cursed monk daun² Constantin
 Hath written in his book *de Coitu*;
 To ete hem alle he wold³ no thing eschieu.
 And to his prive frendes thus sayd he:
 'For Goddes love, as soone as it may be,
 Let voyden al this hous in curteys wise.'
 And thay han doon right as he wold devyse.

¹ *Ypocras* is a mixture of wine and spiees, probably so called because prescribed by Hippocrates. *Clarre* is wine clarified with honey. *Vernage* is the wine *de agro Veronensi*. It was usual to drink spiced wine immediately before going to bed; and in the court of France there was an officer specially appointed to superintend this branch of the household, and called *l'espicier*. Thus, in *The Squier of Low Degree*, the King of Hungary attempts to comfort his daughter by promising her all sorts of luxuries, among others

'Ye shall have rumney and malespine,
 Both *ypocrasse* and *vernage* wine.

* * * *

Both clare, pyment, and roehell.'

For mixing honey with wine our ancestors had the authority of the prince of Epicureans:—

'Nisi Hymettia mella Falerno
 Ne biberis diluta.'—Hor. *Sat.* lib. ii.; *Sat.* ii. 15.

² *Daun* is a corruption of *Dom*, for *Dominus*, the title usually given to the Benedictines, as *Dom Martene*, in allusion to which *La Fontaine*, in his fables, maliciously calls the hog *Dom Porceaux*. This *Dom Constantine* was a writer on medicine, and flourished about A.D. 1080.
 —*Fabric. Bibl. Med. Ætat.*

³ For *wold* the Harl. MS. reads *nas*.

Men drinken, and the travers drawe anoon;
 The bruyd was brought abedde as stille as stoon;
 And whan the bed was with the prest y-blessid;¹
 Out of the chanibre hath every wight him dressed,
 And January hath fast in armes take
 His freisshe May, his paradys, his make.
 He lullith hir, he kissith hir full ofte;
 With thikke bristlis on his berd unsofte,
 Lik to the skyn of houndfisch, scharp as brere,
 (For he was schave al newe in his manere)
 He rubbith hir about hir tendre face,
 And sayde thus: 'Allas! I mot trespace
 To yow, my spouse, and yow gretly offende,
 Or tyme come that I wol down descende;
 But natheles considerith this,' quod he,
 'Ther nys no werkmen, whatsoever he be,
 That may bothe werke wel and hastily;
 This wol be doon at leysir parfitly.
 It is no fors how longe that we pleye;
 In trewe wedlock coupled be we tweye;
 And blessed be the yok that we ben inne,
 For in our actes we mow do no synne.
 A man may do no synne with his wit,
 Ne hurt himselven with his oughne knyf:
 For we han leve to play us by the lawe.'

Thus laborith he, til that the day gan dawe,
 And than he takith a sop in fyn clarre,
 And upright in his bed than sittith he.
 And after that he song ful lowd and clere,
 And kissed his wyf, and made wantoun cheere.

¹ The following is a translation of the form of blessing the nuptial bed to be found in the service books used before the Reformation:—

V. Our help is in the name of the Lord.

R. Who hath made heaven and earth.

V. The Lord be with you.

R. And with thy spirit.

O Lord, bless this bed; that all who rest therein may be in peace with thee, and continue in thy will, and grow old, and multiply in length of days, and finally come to thy heavenly kingdom, through Christ.

He was al coltissch, ful of ragerye,
 And ful of jargoun, as a flekked pye.
 The slakke skin about his nekke schakith,¹
 Whil that he song, so chaunteth he and craketh.
 But God wot what that May thought in hir hert,
 Whan sche him saugh up sittying in his schert,
 In his night-cappe, and with his nekke lene;
 Sche praysith nought his pleying worth a bene.
 Than sayd he thus: ' My reste wol I take
 Now day is come, I may no lenger wake.'
 And doun he layd his heed and sleep til prime.
 And afterward, whan that he saugh his tyme,
 Up riseth January, but freissche May
 Holdith hir chamber unto the fourthe day,
 As usage is of wyves for the best.
 For every labour some tyme moot have rest,
 Or elles longe may he not endure;
 This is to say, no lyves creature,
 Be it of fisch, or brid, or best, or man.

Now wol I speke of woful Damyan,
 That languyssheth for love, as ye schuln here;
 Therefore I speke to him in this manere.
 I say, ' O sely Damyan, alas!
 Answere to my demaunde, as in this caas,
 How schaltow to thy lady, freissche May,
 Telle thy woo? Sche wol alway say nay;
 Eek if thou speke, sche wol thy woo bywreye;
 God be thy help, I can no better seye.'

This seke Damyan in Venus fuyr
 So brennith, that he deyeth for desir;
 For which he put his lyf in aventure,
 No lenger might he in this wo endure,
 But prively a penner² gan he borwe,
 And in a letter wrot he al his sorwe,

¹ Harl. MS. *slaketh*, which is a repetition of the former idea. The reading in the text is from the Lansd. MS.

² Mr. Wright says that a penner was a case containing writing-

In maner of a compleynt or of a lay,
 Unto his faire freissche lady May.
 And in a purs of silk, heng on his schert,
 He hath it put, and layd it at his hert.

The moone that a-noon was thilke day
 That January hath weddid freissche May
 In tuo of Taure, was into Cancre gliden;
 So long hath Mayus in hir chambre abiden,
 As custom is unto these nobles alle.¹
 A bryde schal not eten in the halle,
 Til dayes foure or thre dayes atte lest
 I-passed ben, than let hir go to the fest.
 The fourthe day complet fro noon to noon,
 Whan that the heighe masse was i-doon,
 In halle sitte this January and May,
 As freissch as is the brighte someres day.
 And so bifelle, that this goode man
 Remembrid him upon this Damyan,
 And sayde, 'Seinte Mary! how may this be,
 That Damyan entendith not to me?
 Is he ay seek? or how may this bityde?
 His squiers, which that stooode ther bisyde,
 Excusid him, bycause of his syknesse,
 Which letted him to doon his busynesse;
 Noon other cause mighte make him tarie.
 'That me for-thinketh,' quod this Januarie;
 'He is a gentil squyer, by my trouthe,
 If that he deyde, it were harm and routhe.
 He is as wys, discret, and eek secre,
 As any man I wot of his degre,
 And therto manerly and servysable,
 And for to be a thrifty man right able.

materials, and quotes an early vocabulary, called *Nominale*, in which, among the 'nomina rerum pertinentium clerico,' is *pennare, a penner*. In Occleve's portrait (see *ante*, p. 19) Chaucer is represented with a penner suspended from his neck.

¹ This appears to be the origin of our custom of spending the honeymoon in retirement.

But after mete, as soon as ever I may,
 I wol myself visit him, and eek May,
 To doon him al the confort that I can.
 And for that word him blessed every man,
 That of his bounte and his gentillesse
 He wolde so comfort in seekenesse
 His squyer, for it was a gentil deede.
 'Dame,' quod this January, 'tak good heede,
 At after mete, ye with your wommen alle,
 (Whan ye han ben in chambre out of this halle
 That alle ye goo to se this Damyan;
 Doth him desport, he is a gentil man,¹
 And tellith him that I wil him visite,
 Have I no thing but rested me a lyte;
 And spedith yow faste, for I wol abyde
 Til that ye slepe faste by my syde.'
 And with that word he gan unto him calle
 A squier, that was marchal of his halle,
 And told him certeyn thinges that he wolde.

This freissche May hath streight hir wey i-holde
 With alle hir wommen unto Damyan.
 Doun by his beddes syde sat sche than,
 Comforyng him as goodly as sche may.

This Damyan, whan that his tyme he say,
 In secre wise, his purs, and eek his bille,
 In which that he i-writen had his wille,
 Hath put into hir hond withouten more,
 Save that he siketh wonder deepe and sore,
 And softely to hir right thus say he;
 'Mercy, and that ye not discover me;
 For I am deed,² if that this thing be kidde.'
 This purs hath sche inwith hir bosom hud,

¹ This is an illustration of the fact, that in the middle ages men of good family frequently accepted service in the households of people of rank. Damyan, here called a 'gentil man,' is elsewhere described as being a *homly hew*, or domestic servant, in the house of January.

² Harl. MS. runs on as follows:—

*'if that this thing discovered be,
 This purs in hir bosom hud hath sche.'*

And went hir way ; ye gete no more of me ;
 But unto January comen is sche,
 That on his beddes syde sit ful softe.
 He takith hir, and kissith hir ful ofte ;
 And layd him down to slepe, and that anoon.
 Sche feyned hir as that sche moste goon
 Ther as ye woot that every wight moot neede ;
 And whan sche of this bille hath taken heede,
 Sche rente it al to cloutes atte laste,
 And into the privy softlytly it cast.

Who studieth now but faire freissche May ?
 Adoun by olde January sche lay,
 That slepith, til that the coughe hath him awaked ;
 Anoon he prayde stripen hir al naked,
 He wold of hir, he sayd, have some plesaunce ;
 Hir clothis dede him, he sayde, som grevaunce.
 And sche obeieth, be hir lief or loth.
 But lest that precious folk be with me wroth,
 How that he wroughte I dar not telle,
 Or whethir it semed him paradys or helle ;
 But here I lete hem werken in her wise
 Til evensong rong, and than thay most arise.

Whethir it be by desteny or adventure,
 Were it by influence, or by nature,
 Or by constellacioun, that in such estate
 The heven stood that tyme fortunate,
 As for to putte a bille of Venus werkis
 (For alle thing hath tyme, as seyn these clerkis)
 To eny womman for to gete hir love,
 I can not say ; but grete God above,
 That knowith that noon acte is causeles,
 He deme of al, for I wil holde my pees.
 But soth is this, how that this freisshe May
 Hath take such impressioun that day,
 Of pite on this sike Damyan,
 That from hir herte sche ne dryve can

The reading in the text is from the Lansd. MS., and is adopted because it avoids the repetition of rhymes in the other reading.

The remembraunce for to doon him ease.
 'Certeyn,' thought sche, 'whom that this thing dis-
 I rekke not, for her I him assure, [please
 To love him best of eny creature,
 Though he no more hadde than his scherte.'
 Lo, pite renneth soone in gentil herte.¹
 Heer may ye see, how excellent fraunchise
 In womman is whan thay narow hem avyse.
 Som tyraunt is, as ther ben many oon,
 That hath an hert as hard as is a stoon,
 Which wold han lete sterven in the place
 Wel rather than han graunted him her grace;
 And hem rejoysen in her cruel pride,
 And rekken nought to ben an homicide.

This gentil May, fulfillid of pite,
 Right of hir hond a letter maked sche,
 In which sche grauntith him hir verray grace;
 Ther lakkid nought but oonly day and place,
 Wher that sche might unto his lust suffise;
 For it schal be, right as he wol devyse.
 And whan sche saugh hir tyme upon a day
 To visite this Damyan goth May,
 And subtilly this lettre doun sche thruste
 Under his pylow, rede it if him luste.
 Sche takith him by the honde, and hard him twiste
 So secrely, that no wight of it wiste,
 And bad him be al hool, and forth sche wente
 To January, whan that he for hir sente.
 Up ryseth Damyan the nexte morwe,
 Al passed was his siknes and his sorwe.
 He kembith him, he pruneth him and pyketh,
 He doth al that unto his lady likith;
 And eek to January he goth as lowe
 As ever did a dogge for the bowe.²
 He is so plesaunt unto every man,
 (For craft is al, who so that do it can)

¹ This proverbial expression occurs before, *ante*, p. 145.

² As we say, a dog for the gun.

That every wight is fayn to speke him good;
 And fully in his ladys grace he stood.
 Thus lete I Damyan about his neede,
 And in my tale forth I wol procede.

Some clerkes holden that felicite¹
 Stant in delit, and therfor certeyn he
 This noble January, with al his might
 In honest wise as longith to a knight,
 Schop him to lyve ful deliciously.
 His housyng, his array, as honestly
 To his degre was maked as a kynges.
 Amonges other of his honest thinges
 He had a gardyn walled al with stoon,
 So fair a gardyn wot I no wher noon.
 For out of doute I verrely suppose,
 That he that wroot the Romauns of the Rose,²
 Ne couthe of it the beaute wel devyse;
 Ne Priapus ne might not wel suffice,
 Though he be god of gardyns, for to telle
 The beaute of the gardyn, and the welle,
 That stood under a laurer alway greene.
 Ful ofte tyme he Pluto and his queene³
 Preserpina, and al the fayerie,
 Desporten hem and maken melodye
 Aboute that welle, and daunced, as men tolde.
 This noble knight, this January the olde,
 Such deynte hath in it to walk and pleye,
 That he wold no wight suffre bere the keye,
 Save he himself, for of the smale wyket
 He bar alway of silver a smal cliket,
 With which whan that him list he it unschette.
 And whan he wolde pay his wyf hir dette

¹ Alluding to the Epicurean philosophy.

² The *Roman de la Rose* was begun by William of Loris, who died about 1260, and was finished by John of Meun, one of the wits of the court of Charles le Bel. The difficulties of a lover in obtaining the object of his love are depicted under the allegory of a rose in a beautiful garden surrounded by walls and hedges.

³ See *ante*, p. 335, note 2.

In somer sesoun, thider wold he go,
 And May his wyf, and no wight but thay tuo;
 And thinges which that weren not doon in bedde,
 He in the gardyn parformed hem and spedde.
 And in this wise many a mery day
 Lyved this January and freische May;
 But worldly joye may not alway endure
 To January, ne to no creature.

O sodeyn hap! o thou fortune unstable!
 Lyk to the scorioun so desceyvable,
 That flaterist with thin heed whan thou wilt
 stynges;

Thy tayl is deth, thurgh thin envenymynge.
 O britel joye! o sweete venym queynte!
 O monster, that so subtilly canst peynte
 Thyn giftes, under hew of stedfastnesse,
 That thou desceyvest bothe more and lesse!
 Why hastow January thus deceyved,
 That haddist him for thy fulle frend receyved?
 And now thou hast byreft him bothe his yen,
 For sorw of which desireth he to dyen.
 Allas! this noble January fre,
 Amyd his lust and his prosperite
 Is woxe blynd, and that al sodeynly.
 He wepith and he weyleth pitously;
 And therewithal, the fuyr of jalousye
 (Lest that his wif schuld falle in some folye)
 So brent his herte that he wolde fayn
 That som man bothe hir and him had slayn;
 For neyther after his deth, nor in his lyf,
 Ne wold he that sche were love ne wyf,
 But ever lyve as wydow in clothes blake,
 Soul¹ as the turtill that lost hath hir make.
 But atte last, after a moneth or tweye,
 His sorwe gan aswage, soth to seye.

¹ Sole, alone, or a widow, like the turtle, &c. *Femme sole* is the legal phrase for an unmarried woman.

For whan he wist it may noon other be,
 He paciently took his adversite;
 Save out of doute he may not forgoon,
 That he nas jalous evermore in oon;
 Which jalousie it was so outrageous,
 That neyther in halle, ne in noon other hous,
 Ne in noon other place never the mo
 He nolde suffre hir to ryde or go,
 But if that he had hond on hir alway.
 For which ful ofte wepeth freische May,
 That loveth Damyan so benignely,
 That sche moot outhir deyen sodeinly,
 Or elles sche moot han him as hir lest;
 She waytith whan hir herte wolde brest.
 Upon that other syde Damyan
 Bicomen is the sorwfulleste man
 That ever was, for neyther night ne day
 Ne might he speke a word to fressche May,
 As to his purpos, of no such matiere,
 But if that January most it heere,
 That had an hond upon hir evermo.
 But natheles, by writyng to and fro,
 And prive signes, wist he what sche ment,
 And sche knew eek the fyn of his entent.

O January, what might it thee availe,
 If thou might see as fer as schippes saile?
 For as good is blynd deceyved be,
 As to be deceyved whan a man may see.
 Lo, Argus, which that had an hundred eyen,
 For al that ever he couthe poure or prien,
 Yet was he blent, as, God wot, so ben moo,
 That weneth wisly that it be nought so;
 Passe over is an ease,¹ I say no more.
 This freissche May, that I spak of so yore,
 In warm wex hath emprynted the cliket,
 That January bar of the smale wicket,

¹ Apparently a proverbial expression, similar to 'Of little meddling comes great ease.'

By which into his gardyn ofte he went,
 And Damyan that knew al hir entent
 The cliket counterfeted prively;
 Ther nys no more to say, but hastily
 Som wonder by this cliket schal betyde,
 Which ye schal heeren, if ye wol abyde.

O noble Ovyde, wel soth saistow, God woot,
 What sleight is it though it be long and hoot,
 That he nyl fynd it out in some manere?
 By Piramus and Thesbe may men leere;
 Though thay were kept ful longe streyt over ai,
 Thay ben accorded, rownyng thurgh a wal,
 Ther no wight couthe han found out swich a sleight.
 For now to purpos; er that dayes eyght
 Were passed of the moneth of Juyl, bifille
 That January hath caught so gret a wille,
 Thorugh eggynge of his wyf, him for to pleye
 In his gardyn, and no wight but they tweye,
 That in a morwe unto this May saith he:
 'Rys up, my wif, my love, my lady fre;
 The turtlis vois is herd,¹ my douve sweet;
 The wynter is goon, with his raynes wete.
 Come forth now with thin eyghen columbine.
 How fairer ben thy brestes than is the wyne.
 The gardyn is enclosed al aboute:
 Com forth, my swete spouse, out of doute,
 Thou hast me wounded in myn hert, o wyf;
 No spot in the knew I in al my lif.
 Com forth, and let us take oure desport,
 I ches the for my wyf and my comfort.'
 Such olde lewed wordes used he.
 On Damyan a signe made sche,
 That he schuld go biforn with his cliket.
 This Damyan than hath opened the wiket,
 And in he stert, and that in such manere,
 That no wight it mighte see nor heere,

¹ This phraseology is taken from the Song of Solomon.

And stille he seet under a bussch. Anoon
This January, as blynd as is a stoon,
With Mayus in his hond, and no wight mo,
Into this freische gardyn is ago,
And clappid to the wicket sodeinly.
'Now, wyf,' quod he, 'her nys but ye and I,
Thou art the creature that I best love;
For by that Lord that sit in heven above,
Lever ich had to dyen on a knyf,
Than the offende, deere trewe wyf.
For Goddes sake, thenk how I the chees,
Nought for no coveytise douteles,
But oonly for the love I had to the.
And though that I be old and may not se,
Beeth trewe to me, and I wol telle yow why;
Thre thinges, certes, schul ye wynne therby;
First, love of Crist, and to your self honour,
And al myn heritage, toun and tour.
I give it yow, makith chartres as yow leste;
This schal ben doon to morw er sonne reste,
So wisly God my soule bringe to blisse!
I pray yow first in covenannt ye me kisse.
And though that I be jealous, wyt me nought;¹
Ye ben so deep emprinted in my thought,
That whan that I considre your beaute,
And therwithal the unlikly eelde of me,
I may nought, certes, though I schulde dye,
Forbere to ben out of your companye
For verray love; this is withouten doute:
Now kisse me, wyf, and let us rome aboute.'
This freissche May, whan sche his wordes herde,
Benignely to January answerde,
But first and forward sche bigan to wepe:
'I have,' quod sche, 'a soule for to kepe
As wel as ye, and also myn honour,
And of my wifhod thilke tendre flour,

¹ Do not impute it to me.

Which that I have ensured in your hond,
 Whan that the prest to yow my body bond;
 Wherfor I wil answer in this manere,
 With the leve of yow, myn owen lord, so deere.
 I pray to God that never dawe the day,
 That I ne sterve, as foule as womman may,
 If ever I do unto my kyn that schame,
 Or elles I empaire so my name,
 That I be fals; and if I do that lak,
 Doth strepe me, and put me in a sak,
 And in the nexte ryver do me drenche;
 I am a gentil womman, and no wenche.
 Why speke ye thus? but men ben ever untrewe,
 And wommen han reproof of yow ever newe.
 Ye have noon other countenaunce, I leve,
 But speke to us as of untrust and repreve.'
 And with that word sche saugh wher Damyan
 Sat in the buissh, and coughen sche bigan;
 And with hir fynGRES signes made sche,
 That Damyan schuld clymb upon a tre,
 That charged was with fruyt, and up he went;
 For verrayly he knew al hir entent,
 And every signe that sche couthe make,
 Wel bet than January hir oughne make.
 For in a letter sche had told him al
 Of this matier, how he worche schal.
 And thus I lete him sitte in the pirie,
 And January and May romynge mirye.

Bright was the day, and blew the firmament,
 Phebus hath of gold his stremes doun i-sent
 To gladen every flour with his warmnesse;
 He was that tyme in Gemines, as I gesse,
 But litel fro his declinacioun
 Of Canker, Joves exaltacioun.
 And so bifel that brighte morwen tyde,
 That in that gardyn, in the ferther syde,
 Pluto, that is the kyng of fayerye,
 And many a lady in his compaignie

Folwyng his wif, the queene Preserpina,¹
 Whiche that he ravesched out of Ethna,
 Whil that sche gadred floures in the mede,
 (In Claudian² ye may the story rede,
 How in his grisly carte he hir fette);
 This king of fayry than adoun him sette
 Upon a bench of turves freissh and greene,
 And right anoon thus sayd he to his queene:

‘My wyf,’ quod he, ‘ther may no wight say nay,
 Thexperiens so preveth every day,
 The tresoun which that womman doth to man.
 Ten hundrid thousand stories tellen I can
 Notable of your untrouth and brutelnesse.
 O Salamon, wys and richest of richesse,
 Fulfd of sapiens, and of worldly glorie,
 Ful worthy ben thy wordes to memorie
 To every wight, that wit and resoun can.
 Thus praysith he yit the bounte of man;
 Among a thousand men yit fond I oon,
 But of alle wommen found I never noon.³
 Thus saith the king, that knoweth your wikkednesse;
 That Jhesus, *filius* Sirac,⁴ as I gesse,
 Ne spekith of yow but selde reverence.
 A wild fuyr and corrupt pestilence
 So falle upon your bodies yit to night!
 Ne see ye not this honorable knight?
 Bycause, alas! that he is blynd and old,
 His owne man schal make him cokewold;

¹ Harl. MS. reads:—

. . . . ‘Proserpine
 Ech after other as right as a lyne.’

² Cl. Claudianus was an Egyptian by birth, and wrote in the reign of Theodosius and his sons, Arcadius and Honorius. The work here alluded to is his poem, *De Raptu Proserpinæ*. He has also written *De Bello Getico*, and many epistles and shorter pieces. Coleridge says that he is ‘properly the first of the moderns, or at least the transitional link between the classic and the gothic modes of thought.’—*Table Talk*.

³ Eccles. vii. 28.

⁴ Jesus, the son of Sirach, the writer of the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus.

Loo, wher he sitt, the lecchour, in the tre!
 Now wol I graunten, of my majeste,
 Unto this olde blinde worthy knight,
 That he schal have agein his eyghen sight,
 Whan that his wyf wol do him vilonye;
 Than schal he knowe al her harlotrye,
 Bothe in reproof of her and other mo.
 'Ye schal?' quod Preserpine, 'and wol ye so?
 Now by my modres Ceres¹ soule I swere,
 That I schal give hir suffisaunt answer,
 And alle wommen after for hir sake;
 That though thay be in any gult i-take,
 With face bold thay schul hemself excuse,
 And bere hem doun that wolde hem accuse.
 For lak of answer, noon of hem schal dyen.
 Al had ye seyn a thing with bothe your yen,²
 Yit schul we wymmen visage it hardily,
 And wepe and swere and chide subtilly,
 That ye schul ben as lewed as ben gees;
 What rekkith me of your auctoritees?
 I wot wel that this Jew, this Salamon,
 Fond of us wommen fooles many oon;
 But though he ne fond no good womman,
 Yit hath ther founde many another man
 Wommen ful trewe, ful good, and vertuouse;
 Witnesse on hem that dwelle in Cristes hous,
 With martirdom thay proved hir constaunce.³
 The Romain gestes⁴ eek make remembraunce

¹ Harl. MS., *Sires*.

² Harl. MS.—'Al had a man seyn a thing with bothe his yen.'

³ Proserpine here indicates the true source of the respect with which women were treated in the middle ages, to which chivalrous feeling modern civilization owes, in great measure, its superiority over the old. Yet when Lydgate founds the claim of women to our respect upon the fortitude they displayed in the early ages of Christianity, and upon the purity and virtue of their lives, Warton turns him into ridicule for not rather alleging 'their beauty, amiable accomplishments,' &c., by which they 'refine our sensibilities.'

⁴ [The *Gesta Romanorum* certainly contains the story of Lucretia, but for the most part the tales hardly sustain the character here given to them.]

Of many a veraay trewe wyf also.
 But, sire, be nought wrath, al be it so,
 Though that he sayd he fond no good womman,
 I pray yow tak the sentens of the man;
 He mente thus, that in sovereign bounte
 Nis noon but God, that sit in Trinite.
 Ey, for verrey God that nys but oon,
 What make ye so moche of Salamon?
 What though he made a temple, Goddes hous?
 What though he were riche and glorious?
 So made he eek a temple of fals godis,
 How might he do a thing that more forbod is?
 Parde, als fair as ye his name emplastre,
 He was a lecchour and an ydolastre,
 And in his eelde he verray God forsook;
 And if that God ne hadde (as saith the book)
 I-spared him for his fadres sake,¹ he scholde
 Have lost his regne rather than he wolde.
 i sette right nought of the vilonye,
 That ye of wommen write, a boterflie;
 I am a womman, needes most I speke,
 Or elles swelle tyl myn herte breke.
 For syn he sayd that we ben jangleresses,
 As ever hool I moote brouke my tresses,²
 I schal not spare for no curtesye
 To speke him harm, that wold us vilonye.
 ‘ Dame,’ quod this Pluto, ‘ be no lenger wroth,
 I give it up: but sith I swore myn oth,
 That I wil graunte him his sight agein,
 My word schal stonde, I warne yow certeyn;
 I am a kyng, it sit me nought to lye.’
 ‘ And I,’ quod sche, ‘ am queen of faierie.
 Hir answer schal sche have, I undertake;
 Let us no mo wordes herof make.

¹ 1 Kings xi. 12.

² The sea goddesses in the classics, and the mermaids and other fairies in the popular mythology, are represented as generally seen combing their hair. Hence, perhaps, Proserpine’s oath.

Forsoth I wol no lenger yow contrarie.'

Now let us turne agayn to Januarye,
That in this gardyn with this faire May
Syngeth, ful merier than the papinjay,
'Yow love I best, and schal, and other noon.'
So long about the aleys is he goon,
Til he was come agaynes thilke pirie,
Wher as this Damyan sittith ful mirye
On heigh, among the freische levyes greene.
This freissche May, that is so bright and scheene,
Gan for to syke, and sayd, 'Allas my syde!
Now, sir,' quod sche, 'for aught that may bityde,
I most han of the peres that I see,
Or I moot dye, so sore longith me
To eten of the smale peris greene;
Help for hir love that is of heven queene!
I telle yow wel a womman in my plyt¹
May have to fruyt so gret an appetyt
That sche may deyen, but sche it have.'
'Allas!' quod he, 'that I nad heer a knave
That couthe climbe, allas! allas!' quod he,
'For I am blynd.' 'Ye, sire, no fors,' quod sche;
'But wolde ye vouchesauf, for Goddes sake,
The piry inwith your armes for to take,
(For wel I woot that ye mystruste me)
Than schold I clymbe wel y-nough,' quod sche,
'So I my foot might set upon your bak.'
'Certes,' quod he, 'theron schal be no lak,
Might I yow helpe with myn herte blood.'
He stoupith down, and on his bak sche stood,
And caught hir by a twist,² and up sche goth.
(Ladys, I pray yow that ye be not wroth,
I can not glose, I am a rude man :)
And sodeinly anoon this Damyan

¹ An allusion to the well-known vulgar error about the longings of pregnant women.

² *I.e.* a twig.

Gan pullen up the smok, and in he throng.¹

And whan that Pluto saugh this grete wrong,
To January he gaf agayn his sight,

²And made him see as wel as ever he might.

And whan he thus had caught his sight again,
Ne was ther never man of thing so fayn;

But on his wyf his thought was evermo.

Up to the tree he kest his eyghen tuo,

And seigh that Damyan his wyf had dressid

In which maner it may not ben expressid,

But if I wolde speke uncurteisly.

And up he gaf a roryng and a cry,

As doth the moder whan the child schal dye;

'Out! help! allas! harrow!' he gan to crie;

'O stronge lady stoure, what dos thow?'

And sche answerith: 'Sire, what eylith yow?

Have paciens and resoun in your mynde,

I have yow holpen on bothe your eyen blynde.

Up peril of my soule, I schal not lyen,

As me was taught to hele with your yen,

Was nothing bet for to make yow see,

Than stroggle with a man upon a tree;

God woot, I dede it in ful good entent.'

'Stroggle!' quod he, 'ye, algat in it went.

God give yow bothe on schames deth to dyen!

He swyved the; I saugh it with myn yen;

And elles be I honged by the hals.'

'Than is,' quod sche, 'my medicine fals.

For certeynly, if that ye mighten see,

Ye wold not say tho wordes unto me.

Ye han som glymsyng, and no parfyt sight.'

'I se,' quod he, 'as wel as ever I might,

¹ Tyrwhitt remarks that after this verse, the printed editions (except Caxton 2, and Pynson 1, 2) have eight others of the lowest and most superfluous ribaldry. Both he and Mr. Wright reject them, together with some others of the same character that occur a little farther on, as not being found in any MS. of authority.

² These two lines, not being in the Harl. MS., are given from Tyrwhitt.

(Thankid be God) with bothe myn yen tuo,
 And by my trouth me thought he did the so.
 'Ye mase, mase, goode sir,' quod sche;
 'This thank have I for I have maad yow see;
 Allas!' quod sche, 'that ever I was so kynde.'
 'Now, dame,' quod he, 'let al passe out of mynde;
 Com down, my leef, and if I have myssayd,
 God help me so, as I am evel appayd.
 But by my faders soule, I wende have seyn,
 How that this Damyan had by the leyn,
 And that thy smok had layn upon thy brest.'
 'Ye, sire,' quod sche, 'ye may wene as yow lest;
 But, sire, a man that wakith out of his slep,
 He may not sodeynly wel take keep
 Upon a thing, ne seen it parfyttly,
 Til that he be adawed verrayly.
 Right so a man, that long hath blynd i-be,
 He may not sodeynly so wel i-se,
 First whan the sight is newe comen agayn,
 As he that hath a day or tuo i-sayn.
 Til that your sight y-stablid be a while,
 Ther may ful many a sighte yow bigile.
 Beth war, I pray yow, for, by heven king,
 Ful many man wenith for to se a thing,
 And it is al another than it semeth;
 He that mysconceyveth he mysdemeth.'¹

And with that word sche leep down fro the tre.
 This January who is glad but he?
 He kissith hir, and clippith hir ful ofte,
 And on hir wombe he strokith hir ful softe;
 And to his paleys hom he hath hir lad.
 Now, goode men, I pray yow to be glad.
 Thus endith her my tale of Januarye,
 God blesse us, and his moder seinte Marie!

¹ He whose senses convey an incorrect idea to his mind, cannot form a correct judgment.

THE SQUYERES PROLOGE.

‘EY! Goddes mercy!’ sayd our Hoste tho,
 ‘Now such a wyf I pray God keep me fra
 Lo, whiche sleightes and subtilitees
 In wommen ben; for ay as busy as bees
 Ben thay us seely men for to desceyve,
 And from a soth ever wol thay weyve.
 By this Marchaundes tale it proveth wel.
 But douteles, as trewe as eny steel
 I have a wyf, though that sche pore be;
 But of hir tonge a labbyng schrewe is sche;
 And yit sche hath an heep of vices mo.
 Therof no fors; let alle such thinges go.
 But wite ye what? in counseil be it seyde,
 Me rewith sore I am unto hir teyde;
 And if I scholde reken every vice,
 Which that sche hath, I wis I were to nyce;
 And cause why, it schuld reported be
 And told to hir of som of this meyne,
 (Of whom it needith not for to declare,
 Syn wommen connen oute such chaffare);¹
 And eek my witte suffisith nought therto
 To tellen al; wherfor my tale is do.’²

‘Sir Squier, com forth, if that your wille be,
 And say us a tale of love, for certes ye
 Connen theron as moche as ony man.’

‘Nay, sire,’ quod he; ‘but I wil say as I can
 With herty wil, for I wil not rebelle
 Against your wille; a tale wil I telle,
 Have me excused if that I speke amys;
 My wil is good; and thereto my tale is this.’

¹ Tyrwhitt is at a loss to understand this parenthesis, but it seems to mean, ‘Of whose vices I will not speak; for women, of whom there are many in this company, know well how to divulge it.’

² [A division should probably be made here; see Scheme of the Order of the Tales, vol. ii. pp. 351-354.] In the next line but one the Harl. MS. omits *of love*.

THE SQUYERES TALE.

[THIS tale, to which Warton assigns the first place in the collection, is apparently founded upon a story of Arabian origin, ennobled, no doubt, by Chaucer in the process of transplantation. Almost all the incidents and circumstances are found scattered in different Arabian tales, though not combined in any one. It possesses the fascination of one of the *Arabian Nights*, deepened in human interest; the special attributes of Oriental fiction are faithfully preserved in its gorgeous details and fantastical enchantments; and it is coloured throughout by those peculiar characteristics of Eastern literature which may be traced to the genius and religion of the people. Brilliancy of fancy the Easterns certainly possess, but it is the fancy of the opium-eater; their highest aspirations never contemplate any enjoyment beyond that of sensuality or power. Supernatural influences enter largely into the machinery of Eastern romance; but they assume the form of magic, and are attached to material charms, as in the brazen horse, the mirror and the ring of this tale. The Oriental fabulists sympathise only with success; the dignity of suffering virtue finds no responsive chord in their hearts, which are of the earth, earthy. The main differences between the literatures of the East and West may be partially estimated by a comparison between this unfinished tale and the story of *Constance*, or *The Romance of the Saint Graal*. The latter are impressed with a feeling of responsibility, and of the immutability of the law of right and wrong, which gives an elevation even to their most extravagant flights. Such moral elevation is sought for in vain in Eastern romance. Apart, however, from the radical defects of this style of fiction, its want of aim and mere sensuousness, *The Squyeres Tale* displays pre-eminently Chaucer's marvellous powers of *picture-writing*. The magnificent festivities of a feudal castle, heightened by some glittering touches borrowed from a Saracenic palace, are

produced before the mind's eye with startling reality and gorgeous effect. Tyrwhitt and Warton both follow Milton in thinking that Chaucer left this tale 'half-told;' but, from the following lines in *The Temple of Glass*, by Hawes, a poet of the reign of Henry VII., it would appear that in his time a continuation was in existence, whether by Chaucer or one of his imitators there are no means of ascertaining. The poet describes the ornaments of the Temple:—

And uppermore men depeinten might see
Howe, with her ring, goodlie Canace,
Of every foule the leden and the song
Could understand, as she them walked among.
And how her brother *so often holpen was*
In his mischefe, by the steed of brass.

In *The Squyeres Tale*, as it at present exists, we have no account of Canace's brother's 'mischiefes,' nor of the assistance he received from the enchanted steed. Tyrwhitt gives the following sketch of what he supposes to be the intended sequel of the story, in which he differs essentially from Spenser's continuation. 'The outline, therefore, of the unfinished part of this tale, according to my idea, is nearly this; the conclusion of the story of *The Faucon*,

By mediation of Camballus,

with the help of *the ring*; the conquests of Cambuscan; the winning of Theodora by *Algarsif*, with the assistance of *the horse of brass*; and the marriage of Canace to *some knight*, who was first obliged to fight for her with her *two brethren*; a method of courtship very consonant to the spirit of ancient chivalry.']

A T Sarray, in the lond of Tartary,
Ther dwelled a kyng that werryed Russy,
Thurgh which ther deyed many a doughty man;
This nobil kyng was cleped Cambynskan,¹
Which in his tyme was of so gret renoun,
That ther nas nowher in no regioun

¹ This name (equivalent to Zengis Khan) includes the monarch's title. The Harl. and Lansd. MSS. differ from the ordinary reading, *Cambuskan*, which Milton followed in *Il Penseroso*.

So excellent a lord in alle thing;
 Him lakked nought that longed to a kyng.
 As of the secte of which that he was born,
 He kept his lawe to which he was sworn;¹
 And therto he was hardy, wys, and riche,
 And pitous and just, and alway y-liche,
 Soth of his word, benign and honourable;
 Of his corage as eny centre stable;
 Yong, freisch, and strong, in armes desirous,
 As eny bachiler of al his hous.
 A fair person he was, and fortunat,
 And kepte so wel his real astat,
 That ther was nowher such a ryal man.
 This noble kyng, this Tartre, this Cambynskan,
 Hadde tuo sones by Eltheta his wyf,
 Of which the eldest highte Algarsyf,²
 That other was i-cleped Camballo.
 A doughter had this worthi king also,
 That yongest was, and highte Canace;
 But for to telle yow al hir beaute,
 It lith not on my tonge, ne my connyng,
 I dar nought undertake so heigh a thing;
 Myn Englissh eek is insufficient,
 It moste be a rethor excellent
 That couth his colours longyng for that art,
 If he schold hir discryve in eny part;
 I am non such, I mot speke as I can.

And so bifel it, that this Cambynskan
 Hath twenty wynter born his dyademe;
 As he was wont fro yer to yer, I deme,
 He leet the fest of his nativite
 Don cryen, thurghout Sarray his cite,
 The last Idus of March, after the yeer.
 Phebus the sonne was joly and cleer,

¹ He kept the laws of that form of religion to which he was sworn or bound.

² The Harl. MS. gives *Algaryf* for *Algarsyf*, and *Samballo* for *Camballo*.

For he was neigh his exaltacioun
 In Martes face, and in his mansioun
 In Aries, the colerik, the hote signe.
 Ful lusty was the wedir and benigne,
 For which the foules agein the sonne scheene,
 What for the sesoun and for the yonge greene,
 Ful lowde song in here affecciouns;
 Hem semed have geten hem protecciouns
 Agens the swerd of wynter kene and cold.
 This Cambynskan, of which I have told,
 In royal vesture, sitting on his deys
 With dyadem, ful heigh in his paleys;
 And held his fest solempne and so riche,
 That in this worlde was there noon it liche.
 Of which if I schal tellen al tharray,
 Than wold it occupie a someres day;
 And eek it needith nought for to devyse
 At every cours the ordre and the servyse.
 I wol nat tellen of her straunge sewes,
 Ne of her swannes,¹ ne here heroun-sewes.
 Ek in that lond, as tellen knightes olde,
 Ther is som mete that is ful deynte holde,
 That in this lond men recch of it but smal;
 Ther is no man it may reporten al.
 I wel not tarien you, for it is pryme,²
 And for it is no fruyt, but los of tyme,
 Unto my purpos I wol have my recours.
 That so bifelle after the thridde cours,
 Whil that this kyng sit thus in his nobleye,
 Herkyng his mynstrales her thinges pleye

¹ The swan was formerly a favourite dish. It is still considered a great delicacy in Norfolk, and the fat especially is as much esteemed as that of venison by East Anglian *gourmets*. The old Norwich corporation used to proceed annually down the river in their state barges to Yarmouth, *swan-hopping*—that is, catching and marking the young birds—a custom still followed by the corporation of London. From this custom we derive the tavern sign of the Swan with Two Necks, a corruption of Swan with Two Nicks, the marks made by the Lord Mayor on the swans on the Thames. Herons may now sometimes be seen in the Norwich game-market. ² See *ante*, p. 218, note 2.

Byforne him atte boord deliciously,¹
 In atte halle dore al sodeynly
 Ther com a knight upon a steed of bras,
 And in his hond a brod myrour of glas;
 Upon his thumb he had of gold a ryng,²
 And by his side a naked swerd hangyng:
 And up he rideth to the heyghe bord.³
 In al the halle ne was ther spoke a word,
 For mervayl of this knight; him to byholde
 Ful besily they wayten yong and olde.

This straunge knight that cam thus sodeynly,
 Al armed sauf his heed ful richely,
 Salued the kyng and queen, and lordes alle
 By ordre, as they seten into halle,
 With so heigh reverens and observaunce,
 As wel in speche as in contynaunce,

¹ See *ante*, p. 438, note 5.

² The ring was a symbol of great significance in the middle ages, and was frequently of large size, and worn on the thumb.

³ The palaces of the early Norman kings and nobility consisted of one large oblong hall, like our college halls, at one end of which was a raised platform, from which there was a door into a cellar, or buttery, or *spence*; and over that a sleeping apartment for the great lord and his family. The hall was furnished with long tables, and with a 'heyghe bord' on the dais, at which the seigneur dined, and was strewn with rushes, which at night served for a bed for his numerous retainers. This was the type of all the mediæval dwellings; but as refinement advanced, the number of private sleeping apartments would, of course, be increased. See *Domestic Architecture of the Middle Ages*. A horseman might easily ride up such a hall, without causing any disarrangement of the furniture, which consisted only of boards on tressels, and a few forms and joint-stools. Thus, in Percy's fine ballad of *King Estmere*:—

'Kynge Estmere he light off his steede,
 Up at the fayre hall board,
 The frothe that cam from his brydle bitte
 Light on King Bremor's beard,'

as he sat at dinner. Thus, also, in the *Life of Alexander*, by Adam Davie, who flourished about the year 1312:—

'To the paleis they gon ride,
 And fond this feste in all pruyde;
 Forth goth Alesaunder saun fable
 Ryght to thee heygh table.'

That Gaweyn¹ with his olde curtesye,
 They he were come agein out of fayrre,
 Ne couthe him nought amende with no word.
 And after this, biforn the highe bord
 He with a manly vois sayd this message,
 After the forme used in his langage,
 Withouten vice of sillabil or letter.
 And for his tale schulde seme the better,
 Accordant to his wordes was his cheere,
 As techeth art of speche² hem that it leere.
 Al be it that I can nat sowne his style,
 Ne can nat clymben over so heigh a style,³
 Yit say I this, as to comun entent,
 Thus moche amounteth al that ever he ment,
 If it so be that I have it in mynde.

He sayd: 'The kyng of Arraby and of Ynde,
 My liege lord, on this solempne day
 Saluteth you as he best can or may,
 And sendeth you, in honour of your feste,
 By me, that am redy, at al his heste,
 This steede of bras, that esily and wel
 Can in the space of o day naturel,
 (This is to say, in four and twenty houres)
 Wher so yow lust, in droughthe or in schoures,
 Beren your body into every place,
 To which your herte wilneth for to pace,
 Withouten wem of you, thurgh foul and fair.⁴
 Or if you lust to flee as heigh in thair

¹ The Harl. MS. reads *Ewen*, probably from the scribe having confounded the two heroes Ywayne and Gawaine in the romance of that name; but Gawaine is evidently the person meant, for he is always considered the model of courtesy in the court of Arthur, as in Percy's ballad:—

'Then bespake him Ser Gawaine,
 That was ever a gentle knight.'

² 'It was the boast of one of their historians that the Norman gentlemen were orators from their cradle.'—MACAULAY, *Hist. Eng.*, vol. i.

³ This appears to be a pun on the word *style*.

⁴ The horse and mirror will remind the reader of the enchanted carpet and perspective glass given to Prince Ahmed by the fairy Pari Banou, in *The Arabian Nights*.

As doth an egle, whan him list to sore,
 This same steede schal bere you evermore
 Withoute harm, til ye be ther yow leste,
 (Though that ye slepen on his bak or reste),
 And torne agein, with wrything of a pyn.
 He that it wrought, he cowthe many a gyn;
 He wayted many a constellacioun,
 Er he had do this operacioun,
 And knew ful many a seal¹ and many a bond.
 'This mirour eek, that I have in myn hond,
 Hath such a mighte, that men may in it see
 When ther schal falle eny adversite
 Unto your regne, or to your self also,
 And openly, who is your frend or fo.
 And over al this, if eny lady bright
 Hath set hir hert on eny maner wight,
 If he be fals, sche schal his tresoun see,
 His newe love, and his subtilite,
 So openly, that ther schall nothing hyde.
 Wherfor ageins this lusty somer tyde
 This mirour and this ryng, that ye may see,
 He hath send to my lady Canacee,
 Your excellente doughter that is heere.
 'The vertu of this ryng, if ye wol heere,
 Is this, that who so lust it for to were
 Upon hir thomb, or in hir purs to bere,
 Ther is no foul that fleeth under the heven,
 That sche ne schal understonden his steven,
 And know his menyng openly and pleyn,
 And answer him in his langage ageyn;

¹ Warton says on this line, 'Seal may mean a talismanic sigil used in astrology. Or the hermetic seal used in chemistry. Or connected with *bond*, may signify contracts made with spirits in chemical operations. But all these belong to the Arabian philosophy. See d'Herbelot, *Dict. Orient.*, pp. 810, 1005.' The east was always the land of magic, which was imported into Western Europe by the Crusaders. They had unhappily forgotten the example of the early Christians, who, on their conversion, burned their magical books. Acts xix. 19.

And every gras that groweth upon roote
 Sche schal eek know, to whom it wol do boote,
 Al be his woundes never so deep and wyde.

‘This naked swerd, that hangeth by my side,
 Such vertu hath, that what man that it smyte,
 Thurghout his armur it wol kerve and byte,
 Were it as thikke as a braunched ook;
 And what man is i-wounded with the strook
 Schal never be hool, til that you lust of grace
 To strok him with the plat in thilke place
 Ther he is hurt; this is as moche to seyn,
 Ye moote with the platte swerd agein
 Stroke him in the wound, and it wol close.
 This is the verray soth withouten glose,
 It failleth nought, whil it is in your hold.’

And whan this knight thus had his tale told,
 He rit out of the halle, and down he light.
 His steede, which that schon as sonne bright,
 Stant in the court as stille as eny stoon.
 This knight is to his chambre lad anoon,
 And is unarmed, and to mete i-sett.
 This presentz ben ful richely i-fett,
 This is to sayn, the swerd and the myrrour,
 And born anon unto the highe tour,
 With certein officers ordeynd therfore;
 And unto Canace the ryng is bore
 Solempnely, ther sche syt atte table;
 But sikerly, withouten eny fable,
 The hors of bras, that may nat be remewed,
 It stant, as it were to the ground i-glewed;
 Ther may no man out of the place it dryve
 For noon engyn of wyndas¹ or polyve;
 And cause why, for they can nought the craft.
 And therfor in the place thei have it laft,
 Til that the knight hath taught hem the manere
 To voyden him, as ye schul after heere.

¹ Harl. MS., *wyndyng*.

Greet was the pres that swarmed to and fro
 To gauren on this hors that stondeþ so;
 For it so high¹ was, and so brod and long,
 So wel proporcioned to be strong,
 Right as it were a steed of Lumbardye;²
 Therto so horsly, and so quyk of ye,
 As it³ a gentil Poyleys courser were;
 For certes, fro his tayl unto his eere
 Nature ne art ne couthe him nought amende
 In no degre, as al the poepel wende.
 But evermore her moste wonder was,
 How that he couthe goon, and was of bras;
 It was of fayry, as the poeple semed.
 Diverse peple diversly they demed;
 As many hedes, as many wittes been.
 They murmured, as doth a swarm of been,
 And made skiles after her fantasies,
 Rehersyng of the olde poetries,
 And seyden it was i-like the Pegase,⁴
 The hors that hadde wynges for to fle;
 Or elles it was the Grekissch hors Synon,⁵
 That broughte Troye to destruccioun,
 As men may in the olde gestes rede.
 'Myn hert,' quod oon, 'is evermore in drede,
 I trow som men of armes ben therinne,
 That schapen hem this cite for to wyne;
 It were good that such thing were knowe.'
 Another rownded to his felaw lowe,
 And sayde: 'It lyth, for it is rather lik
 An apparence maad by som magik,

¹ Harl. MS., *wyd*.

² The rich plains of Lombardy produced a breed of strong heavy horses, like our Lincolnshire dray-horse, well suited to carry a knight in heavy armour. The steed of brass combined the bone and power of this heavy war-horse with the spirit and breeding of a 'gentil Poyleys courser,' that is, a thorough-bred horse of *Apulia*, French *Poille*.

³ The Harl. MS. reads *if*, which does not make sense. It is from Tyrwhitt.

⁴ Margin of Harl. MS., *equus pegaseus*.

⁵ [The text should be 'the Grekes hors Sinon,' i.e., the horse of Sinon the Greek, a usual Middle-English idiom.—W. W. S.]

As jogelours¹ pleyen at this festes grete.
 Of sondry thoughtes thus they jangle and trete,
 As lewed peple demeth comunly
 Of thinges that ben maad more subtily
 Than they can in her lewednes comprehende,
 They deemen gladly to the badder ende.
 And som of hem wondred on the mirroure,
 That born was up into the maister tour,²
 How men might in it suche thinges se.
 Another answerd, and sayd, it might wel be
 Naturelly by composiciouns
 Of angels,³ and of heigh reflexiouns;
 And sayde that in Rome⁴ was such oon.
 They speeke of Alhazen⁵ and Vitilyon,
 And Aristotle, that writen in her lyves
 Of queynte myrrours and prospectyves,
 As knowen they that han her bokes herd.
 And other folk have wondred on the swerd,
 That wolde passe thoroughout every thing;
 And fel in speche of Telophus the kyng,
 And of Achilles for his queynte spere,
 For he couthe with it bothe hele and dere,⁶
 Right in such wise as men may with the swerd,
 Of which right now ye have your selven herd.

¹ See *ante*, p. 357, note 5.

² The chief tower, called the donjon.

³ Angels.

⁴ An allusion to a magical image said to have been placed by the enchanter Virgil in the middle of Rome, which communicated to the Emperor Titus all the secret offences committed every day in the city. *Gesta Roman.*, c. lvii. The poet was invested with the character of a necromancer, or wizard, because the heathen mythology enters so largely into his writings.

⁵ Harl. MS. for *Alhazen* reads *Alceyt*. *Alhazeni et Vitellionis opera* are extant, printed at Basil in 1572. The first is supposed by his editor to have lived about A.D. 1100, and the second in A.D. 1270.—T.

⁶ Telephus, the son of Hercules and Auge, was wounded by Achilles with his spear, and healed by the application of some rust from the same weapon. Petronius, in his epigram *De Telepho*, exactly describes the qualities of Cambynskan's magic sword:—'Unde datum est vulnus, contigit inde salus.' [The allusion is in Ovid, whence Chaucer took it.—W. W. S.]

They speeken of sondry hardyng of metal,
 And speken of medicines therwithal,
 And how and whan it schulde harded be,
 Which is unknowe algat unto me.
 Tho speeken they of Canacees ryng,
 And seyden alle, that such a wonder thing
 Of craft of rynges herd they never noon,
 Sauf that he Moyses and kyng Salamon¹
 Hadden a name of connyng in such art.
 Thus seyen the peple, and drawen hem apart.²
 But natheles som seiden that it was
 Wonder thing to make of ferne aisschen glas,³
 And yit is glas nought like aisschen of ferne,
 But for they han i-knowen it so ferne;
 Therfor cesseth her janglyng and her wonder.
 As sore wondred som of cause of thonder,
 On ebbe and flood, on gossomer, and on myst,
 And on alle thing, til that the cause is wist.
 Thus janglen they, and demen and devyse,
 Til that the kyng gan fro his bord arise.
 Phebus hath left the angel merydyonal,
 And yit ascendyng was a best roial,
 The gentil Lyoun, with his Aldryan,⁴
 Whan that this gentil kyng, this Cambynskan,
 Ros fro his bord, ther as he sat ful hye;
 Biforn him goth ful lowde menstralcy,

¹ It is easily seen how Moses and Solomon came to be ranked among magicians. Moses was 'learned in all the learning of the Egyptians;' but the Egyptian learning, like all Eastern philosophies, if they can be dignified by the name, was a form of magic and soothsaying. Exodus, *passim*. Solomon, in his old age, served the false gods Ash-toreth, Chemosh, and Molech, whose worship consisted in a most impure and cruel necromancy.

² Harl. MS.:—

'The people on every part.'

³ The people said, This miraculous sword, glass, and ring, are not more wonderful than the manufacture of glass, which is made of the ashes of fern, and other plants, and sand, and yet is like none of its component parts; nor would any one have guessed of what it is composed, had they not been so far previously informed.

⁴ Harl. MS., *Adryan*.

Til he cam to his chambre of parementz,¹
 Ther as ther were divers instrumentz,
 That is y-like an heven for to heere.

Now dauncen lusty Venus children deere;
 For in the fisch her lady sat ful heyghe,²
 And loketh on hem with a frendly eyghe.
 This noble kyng is set upon his trone;
 This straunge knight is fet to him ful sone,
 And in the daunce he gan with Canace.
 Her is the revel and the jolyte,
 That is not able a dul man to devyse;
 He most have knowe love and his servise,
 And ben a festly man, as freisch as May,
 That schulde you devyse such array.
 Who couthe telle you the forme of daunce
 So uncouth, and so freische countinaunce,
 Such subtil loking of dissimilynges,
 For drede of jalous folk apparceyvynge?
 No man but Launcolet,³ and he is deed.
 Therefore I passe over al this lustyheed,
 I say no more, but in this jolynesse
 I lete hem, til men to soper hem dresse.
 The styward byt the spices for to hye
 And eek the wyn, in al this melodye;
 Thes usschiers and thes squyers ben agon,
 The spices and the wyn is come anoon;
 They eet and drank, and whan this had an ende,
 Unto the temple, as resoun was, they wende;

¹ *Chambre de paremens* is translated by Cotgrave the presence-chamber, and *lit de paremens*, a bed of state. *Paremens* originally signified all sorts of ornamental furniture or clothes, from *parer*, to adorn. See *ante*, p. 169, and *Leg. of G. W. Dido*, verse 181:—

‘To dauncing chambres, ful of parementes,
 Of riche beddes and of pavementes,
 This Eneas is lette after the mete.’

The Italians have the same expression, *Ist. di Conc. Trident.*, lib. iii.:—
 ‘Il Pontefice, ritornato alla camera de’ paramenti co’ Cardinali.’—T.

² See *ante*, p. 329, note 2.

³ Launcelot intrigued with Queen Guenever, and was therefore skilled in such arts.

The servise doon, they soupen al by day.¹
What needeth you to rehersen her array?
Ech man wot wel, that a kynges feste
Hath plente, to the lest and to the meste,
And deyntees mo than ben in my knowyng.
At after souper goth this noble kyng
To see this hors of bras, with al his route
Of lordes and of ladyes him aboute.
Swich wondryng was ther on this hors of bras,
That seth this grete siege of Troye was,
Ther as men wondrid on an hors also,
Ne was ther such a wondryng as was tho.
But fynally the kyng asked the knight
The vertu of this courser, and the might,
And prayd him tellen of his governaunce.
The hors anoon gan for to trippe and daunce,
Whan that the knight leyd hand upon his rayne,
And sayde, 'Sir, ther is nomore to sayne,
But whan you lust to ryde any where,
Ye moote trille a pyn, stant in his ere,
Which I schal telle you betwen us two,
Ye moste nempne him to what place also,
Or what countre you luste for to ryde.
And whan ye come ther you lust abyde,
Bid him descende, and trille another pynne,
(For therin lith theffet of al the gynne)
And he wol down descend and do your wille,
And in that place he wol abyde stille;
Though al the world had the contrary swore,
He schal nat thennes be i-throwe ne bore.
Or if you lust to bid him thennes goon,
Trille this pyn, and he wol varyssh anoon
Out of the sight of every maner wight,
And come agein, be it by day or night,
Whan that you lust to clepen him agayn
In such a gyse, as I schal yow sayn

¹ See *ante*, p. 394, note 3.

Betwixe you and me, and therfor soone,
 Byd whan you lust, ther nys nomor to donne.
 Enformed whan the kyng was of the knight,
 And had conceyved in his wit aright
 The maner and the forme of al this thing,
 Ful glad and blith, this noble doughty kyng
 Repeyryng to his revel, as biforn,
 The bridel is unto the tour i-born,
 And kept among his jewels leef and deere;
 The hors vanyscht, I not in what manere,
 Out of her sight, ye get nomore of me;
 But thus I lete him in his jolite
 This Cambinskan his lordes festeyng,
 Til wel neigh the day bigan to spryng.

INCIPIT SECUNDA PARS.

THE norice of digestioun, the sleep,
 Gan to hem¹ wynk, and bad of him take keep,
 That mirthe and labour wol have his rest;²
 And with a galpyng³ mouth hem alle he keste,
 And sayd, that it was tyme to lye down,
 For blood was in his dominacioun:
 ‘Cherischeth blood, natures frend,’ quod he.
 They thankyn him galpyng, by two and thre;
 And every wight gan drawe him to his rest,
 As sleep hem bad, they took it for the best.

¹ *Hem* has been substituted from Tyrwhitt, as giving a better sense than *him*, the reading of the Harl. MS.

² Of this line there are several readings; that given in the text from the Harl. MS. is rejected by Mr. Wright for *moche mete and labour*, which seems neither to give so good a sense, nor to agree with the metre. The meaning appears obvious, though Tyrwhitt thinks otherwise. What can be more to the purpose than to say that mirth and labour equally require rest?

³ There is something excessively grotesque and highly characteristic of mediæval taste in the personification of Sleep kissing the revellers with yawning mouth, and setting them all yawning; and their thanking him in yawns ‘by one, by two, by three’—all gradually dropping in, and joining in a grand yawning chorus.

Here dremes schul not now be told for me;
 Ful were here heedes of fumosite,
 That causeth drem. of which ther is no charge.
 They slepen til that¹ it was prime large,²
 The moste part, but it were Canace;
 Sche was ful mesurable,³ as wommen be.
 For of hir fader had sche take hir leve
 To go to reste, soon after it was eve;
 Hir luste not appalled for to be,
 Ne on the morwe unfestly for to se;
 And kept hir firste sleep, and then awook.
 For such a joye sche in hir herte took,
 Bothe of hir queynte ryng, and hir myrrour,
 That twenty tyme chaunged hire colour;
 And in hire sleep, right for the impressioun
 Of hir myrrour, sche had a visioun.
 Wherfor, or that the sonne up gan glyde,
 Sche cleped upon hir maistresse beside,
 And sayde, that hire luste for to ryse.
 These olde wommen, that ben gladly wyse,
 As is here maystresse,⁴ answered her anoon,
 And sayd, 'Madame, whider wold ye goon
 Thus erly? for folk ben alle in reste.'
 'I wil,' quod sche, 'aryse, for me leste
 No lenger for to slepe, and walke aboute.'
 Her maistres clepeth wommen a gret route,
 And up they risen, a ten other a twelve.
 Up ryseth fresshe Canace hir selve,
 As rody and bright, as is the yonge sonne
 That in the ram is ten degrees i-ronne;
 No heiher was he, whan sche redy was;
 And forth sche walked esily a pas,
 Arayed after the lusty sesoun soote
 Lightly for to play, and walke on foote,

¹ That has been added from Tyrwhitt for the sake of the metre.

² See *ante*, p. 218, note 2. *Prime large* appears to mean till the hour of prime was nearly spent, and the hour of tierce was about to begin.

³ Moderate in eating and sleeping.

⁴ Her governess.

Nought but with fyve or six of hir meyne ;
 And in a trench¹ fer in the park goth sche.
 The vapour, which that of the erthe glod,
 Maketh the sonne seme rody and brod ;
 But natheles, it was so fair a sight,
 That it made alle here hertes for to light,
 What for the sesoun, what for the mornyng
 And for the foules that sche herde syng.
 For right anoon sche wiste what they ment
 Right by here song, and knew al here entent.

The knotte,² why that every tale is told,
 If that it be taryed til lust be cold
 Of hem that han it after herkned yore,
 The savour passeth ever lenger the more,
 For fulsomnes of the prolixite ;
 And by this same resoun thinketh me
 I schulde to the knotte condescende,
 And make of hir walkyng sone an ende.

Amyddes a tree for druye as whit as chalk,³
 As Canace was pleyng in hir walk,
 There sat a faukoun over hir heed ful hye,
 That with a pitous vois bigan to crye,
 That al the woode resowned of hire cry,
 And beten hadde sche hir self so pitously⁴
 With bothe hir wynges, to the reede blood
 Ran endelong the tree, ther as sche stood.
 And ever in oon sche cried and sche schryght,
 And with hir bek hir selve so sche pight,
 That ther nys tigre non ne cruel beste,
 That dwelleth eyther in wood, or in foreste,
 That nold han wept, if that he wepen cowde,
 For sort^r of hir, sche schright alway so lowde.

¹ *Trench* appears to mean *dell*.

² The complication of circumstances which forms the interest of the story. The expression is Horace's:—'*Dignus vindice nodus*.'—*Epist. ad Pisones*.

³ As white as chalk for very dryness.—See *ante*, p. 188, note 2.

⁴ The line is not an Alexandrine, of which Chaucer has none. The *-en* in *beten* is very rapid. For *had*, the Ellesmere MS. reads *hath*, which settles the scansion.—W. W. S.]

For ther nas never yit no man on lyve,
 If that he couthe a faukoun wel discrive,
 That herd of such another of fairnesse
 As wel of plumage, as of gentillesse
 Of schap, of al that might i-rekened be.
 A faukoun peregryn¹ than semed sche
 Of fremde lond; and ever as sche stood,
 Sche swowned now and now for lak of blood,
 Til wel neigh is sche fallen fro the tre.
 This faire kynges doughter, Canace,
 That on hir fynger bar the queynste ryng,
 Thurgh which sche understood wel every thing
 That eny foul may in his lydne² sayn,
 And couthe answer him in his lydne agayn,
 Hath understonde what this faukoun seyde,
 And wel neigh almost for the rewthe sche deyde.
 And to the tree sche goth ful hastily,
 And on this faukoun loketh pitously,
 And held hir lappe abrod, for wel sche wist
 The faukoun moste falle fro the twist,
 Whan that sche swowned next, for lak of blood.
 A long while to wayten hir sche stood,
 Til atte last sche spak in this manere
 Unto the hauk, as ye schul after heere.
 'What is the cause, if it be for to telle,
 That ye ben in that furyalle peyne of helle?'

¹ Tyrwhitt quotes from an old treatise of falconry. 'La seconde lignie est faucons, que hom apele *pelerins*, par ce que nus ne trove son ni. Ains est pris autresi come en *pelerinage*, et est mult legiers a norrir, et mult cortois, et vaillans, et de bone maniere.' This agrees with Chaucer's description of the falcon as of *fremde* or foreign *lond*. From being *mult courtois* it was called the falcon gentil, or gentle. Thus in *The Assembly of Foules* :—

'The gentle faucon, that with his feet distreineth
The king's hand,' &c.

² *Leden* or *lidne*—language, Saxon; a corruption of the word *Latin*. Dante uses *Latin* in the same sense. Canz. i. :—

'E cantine gli augelli
Ciascuno in suo *latino*.'

Quod Canace unto this hauk above ;
 ' Is this for sorwe of deth, or elles love ?
 For as I trowe, this ben causes tuo
 That causen most a gentil herte wo.
 Of other harm it needeth nought to speke,
 For ye your self upon your self awreke ;
 Which preveth wel, that either ire or drede
 Mote ben enchesoun of your cruel dede,
 Sith that I see noon other wight you chace.
 For love of God, so doth your selve grace.
 Or what may ben your helpe ? for west ner est
 Ne saugh I never er now no bryd ne beste,
 That ferde with him self so pitously.
 Ye sle me with your sorwe so verrily,
 I have of you so gret compassioun.
 For Goddes love, come fro the tree adoun ;
 And as I am a kynges doughter trewe,
 If that I verrayly the cause knewe
 Of your disese, if it lay in my might,
 I wold amenden it, or that it wer night,¹
 Als wisly help me grete God of kynde.
 And herbes schal I right y-nowe fynde,
 To helen with your hurtes hastyly.'
 Tho schright this faukoun more pitously
 Than ever sche did, and fil to ground anoon,
 And lay aswowne, deed as eny stoon,
 Til Canace hath in hir lap y-take,
 Unto that tyme sche gan of swowne slake ;
 And after that sche gan of swown abreyde,
 Right in hir haukes lydne thus sche sayde.
 ' That pite renneth sone in gentil hert
 (Felyng his similitude in peynes smerte)
 Is proved alday, as men may see,
 As wel by werk as by auctorite ;²

¹ Harl. MS, *if that I might*.

² As well by example as by this proverb.

For gentil herte kepeth gentillesse.
 I see wel, that ye have on my distresse
 Compassioun, my faire Canace,
 Of verray wommanly benignite,
 That nature in your principles hath set.
 But for noon hope for to fare the bet,
 But for to obeye unto your herte fre,
 And for to make othere war by me,
 As by the whelp chastised is the lyoun;
 And for that cause and that conclusioun,
 Whiles that I have a leyser and a space,
 Myn harm I wil confessen er I pace.'
 And whil sche ever of hir sorwe tolde,
 That other wept, as sche to water wolde,
 Til that the faucoun bad hir to be stille,
 And with a sighhe thus sche sayd hir tille.
 'Ther I was bred, (allas that ilke day!)
 And fostred in a roch of marble gray
 So tendrely, that nothing eyled me,
 I ne wiste not what was adversite,
 Til I couthe flee ful heigh under the sky.
 Tho dwelled a tercelet¹ me faste by,
 That semed welle of alle gentillesse;
 Al were he ful of tresoun and falsnesse,
 It was i-wrapped under humble cheere,
 And under heewe of trouthe in such manere,
 Under plesaunce, and under besy peyne,
 That no wight wende that he couthe feyne,
 So deep in greyn he deyed his colours.
 Right as a serpent hut him under floures
 Til he may see his tyme for to byte:
 Right so this god of loves ypocrite²

¹ The tercelet is the male of the peregrine falcon, and, unlike most other males, is smaller and less courageous than the female. See *Romeo and Juliet*, Act ii. sc. 2:—

'O for a falconer's voice
 To lure this tassel-gentle back again.'

² Harl. MS.—'This god of love, this ypocrite.' The meaning is, 'this hypocritical worshipper of the god of love.'

Doth so his sermonys and his observaunce,
 Under subtil colour and aqueyntaunce,
 That sowneth unto gentillesse of love.
 As in a tombe is al the faire above,
 And under is the corps,¹ whiche that ye wot;
 Such was this ipocrite, bothe cold and hot,
 And in this wise he served his entent,
 That, sauf the feend, noon wiste what he ment.
 Til he so long had weped and compleyned,
 And many a yeer his service to me feyned,
 Til that myn hert, to pitous and to nyce,
 Al innocent of his crouned malice,
 For-fered of his deth, as thoughte me,
 Upon his othes and his sewerte,
 Graunted him love, on this condicioun,
 That evermo myn honour and my renoun
 Were saved, both pryvy and apert;
 That is to sayn, that, after his desert,
 I gaf him al myn hert and al my thought,
 (God woot, and he, that other weye nought)
 And took his hert in chaunge of myn for ay.
 But soth is sayd, go sithens many a day,
 A trew wight and a thief thenketh nought oon.
 And when he saugh the thyng so fer i-gooun,
 That I had graunted him fully my love,
 In such a wyse as I have sayd above,
 And geven him my trewe hert as fre
 As he swor that he gaf his herte to me,
 Anon this tigre, ful of doublenesse,
 Fil on his knees with so gret devoutenesse,
 With so high reverence, as by his chere,
 So lyk a gentil lover of manere,
 So ravysched, as it semede, for joye,
 That never Jason, ne Parys of Troye,

¹ Matt. xxiii. 27.

² God and he know that I loved him in no other way.

Jason? certes, ne noon other man,
 Sith Lameth¹ was, that altherfirst bygar
 To loven two, as writen folk biforn,
 Ne never sith the firste man was born,
 Ne couthe man by twenty thousand part
 Contrefete the sophemes of his art;
 Ne were worthy to unbokel his galoche,
 Ther doublenes of feynyng schold approche,
 Ne so couthe thankyn a wight, as he did me.
 His maner was an heven for to see
 To eny womman, were sche never so wys;
 So peynteth he and kembeth,² poynt devys,
 As wel his wordes, as his continuaunce.
 And I so loved him for his obeisaunce,
 And for the trouthe I demed in his herte,
 That if so were that eny thing him smerte,
 Al were it never so litel, and I it wist,
 Me thought I felte deth at myn hert twist.
 And schortly, so ferforth this thing is went,
 That my wil was his willes instrument;
 This is to say, my wille obeied his wille
 In alle thing, as fer as resoun fille,
 Kepyng the boundes of my worschip ever;
 Ne never had I thing so leef, ne lever,
 As him, God woot, ne never schal nomo.
 This laste lenger than a yeer or two,
 That I supposed of him nought but good.
 But fynally, atte laste thus it stood,
 That fortune wolde that he moste twynne
 Out of the place which that I was inne.
 Wher me was wo, it is no questioun;
 I can nat make of it descripcioun.
 For o thing dar I telle boldely,
 I know what is the peyne of deth, therby,

¹ Lamech was the first who had two wives.—Gen. iv.

² *Combeth*. The sense in the text is settles, or arranges, his words and countenance at poynt devys, with care and precision.

Which harm I felt, for he ne mighte byleve.¹
 So on a day of me he took his leve,
 So sorwful eek, that I went verrayly,
 That he had feled als moche harm as I,
 Whan that I herd him speke, and saugh his hewe.
 But natheles, I thought he was so trewe,
 And eek that he schulde repeire ageyn
 Withinne a litel while, soth to seyn,
 And resoun wold eek that he moste go
 For his honour, as oft it happeth so.²
 Than I made vertu of necessite,
 And took it wel, sethens it moste be.
 As I best might, I had fro him my sorwe,
 And took him by the hand, seint Johan to borwe,³
 And sayde thus: 'Lo, I am youres al,
 Beth such as I have be to you and schal.'
 What he answerd, it needeth nat to reherse:
 Who can say bet than he, who can do werse?
 Whan he hath al wel sayd, than hath he doon.
 Therfor bihoveth him a ful long spoon,
 That schal ete with a feend;⁴ thus herd I say.
 So atte last he moste forth his way,
 And forth he fleeth, til he cam ther him leste.
 Whan it cam him to purpos for to reste,
 I trow he hadde thilke text⁵ in mynde,
 That alle thing repeyryng to his kynde

¹ I can form some conception of the pain of death from what I then suffered. I felt such distress as he could not believe.

² Harl. MS. omits *as oft it happeth so*. The words are supplied from Tyrwhitt.

³ With the help of St. John, a common form of invocation.

⁴ This expressive proverb was common in the middle ages. Mr. Wright points out two places in Shakespeare where it occurs. *Comedy of Errors*, Act iv. sc. 3, 'Marry, he must have a long spoon that must eat with the devil;' and *Tempest*, Act ii. sc. 2, Stephano says, 'Mercy! mercy! this is a devil, and no monster: I will leave him; I have no long spoon.'

⁵ This is taken from Boethius, lib. iii. met. 2, thus translated by Chaucer:—'All thynges seken ayen to hir propre course, and all thynges rejoysen on hir retourninge agayne to hir nature.' The comparison of the bird is from the same source.

Gladeth himself; thus seyn men, as I gesse;
 Men loven of kynde newefangilnesse,
 As briddes doon, that men in cage feede.
 For theigh thou night and day take of hem heede,
 And straw her cage faire and soft as silk,
 And geve hem sugre, hony, breed, and mylk,
 Yet right anoon as that his dore is uppe,
 He with his feet wil sporne doun his cuppe,¹
 And to the wode he wil, and wormes ete;
 So newefangel be thei of her mete,
 And loven non leveres of propre kinde;
 No gentiles of blood ne may hem binde.
 So ferde this tercelet, alas the day!
 Though he were gentil born, and fresh, and gay,
 And goodly for to see, and humble, and free,
 He saw upon a time a kite² fle,
 And sodeynly he loved this kite soo,
 That al his love is clene fro me goo;
 And hath his trouthe falsed in this wise.
 Thus hathe the kite my love in hir servise,
 And I am lorne withoute remedy.
 And with that worde this faukon gan to cry,
 And swowneth eft in Canacees barme.
 Gret was the sorwe for that haukes harme,
 That Canace and alle hire wommen made;
 They nysten howe they myght the faukon glade.
 But Canace hom bereth hir in hir lappe,
 And softly in plastres gan hir wrappe,
 Ther as sche with hir bek hadde hurt hir selve.
 Now can nought Canace bot herbes delve
 Out of the grounde, and maken salves newe
 Of herbes precious and fyne of hewe,

¹ A leaf or two have unfortunately been lost from the Harl. MS. after this line, and I am obliged to take the remainder of the tale from Tyrwhitt, collated with the Lansd. MS.—W.

² The kite is a cowardly species of hawk, quite unfit for falconry, and was, therefore, the emblem of everything base, in the ages when the love of this sport almost amounted to madness.

To helen with this hauk ;¹ fro day to night
 Sche doth hir besines, and al hir might.
 And by hir beddes heed sche made a mewe,²
 And covered it with veluettes blewe,³
 In signe of trewthe that is in womman seene;
 And al withoute the mewe is peynted greene,
 In whiche were peynted alle this false foules,
 As ben this tideves, tercelettes, and owles;
 And pies, on hem for to crye and chide,
 Right for despite were peynted hem byside.⁴

Thus lete I Canace hir hauk kepyng.
 I wil nomore now speken of hir rynge,
 Til it come eft to purpos for to seyn,
 How that this faukon gat hir love ageyn
 Repentaunt, as the story telleth us,
 By mediacioun of Camballus
 The kinges sone, of which that I yow tolde;
 But hennesforth I wil my proces holde
 To speken of adventures, and of batailes,
 That yit was never herd so grete mervailles.
 First wil I telle yow of Cambynskan;
 That in his time many a cite wan;
 And after wil I speke of Algarsif,
 How that he wan Theodora to his wif.⁵
 For whom ful ofte in grete peril he was,
 Ne had he ben holpen by the hors of bras.

¹ To heal this hawk with.

² A *mew* was the technical name for the place where hawks were kept to mew or moult in.

³ Blue was the colour of truth, and green of inconstancy; hence, in Chaucer's *Ballade on an Inconstant Lady* :—

‘Instede of blewe, thus may ye were al grene.’

⁴ The MSS. transpose these two lines, evidently by mistake. Magpies are observed to follow all birds and beasts of prey with loud cries, as if scolding them, to which habit the allusion refers.

⁵ The lines of this couplet are also transposed in many MSS. and printed editions. Tyrwhitt puts them right, and observes, ‘According to the common arrangement, old Canibuscan is to win Theodora to his wyf, and we are not told what is to be the object of Algarsif's adventures.’

And after wil I speke of Camballo,
 That fought in listes with the bretheren tuo
 For Canacc, er that he might hir wynne,
 And ther I left I wol ageyn beginne.¹

* * * *

THE FRANKELEYNES PROLOGE.

‘**I**N faith, Squier, thou hast the wel y-quit²
 And gentilly, I preise wel thy wit,’
 Quod the Frankeleyn, ‘considering thin youthe;
 So felingly thou spekest, sire, I aloue the,
 As to my dome, ther is non that is here,
 Of eloquence that schal be thy pere,
 If that thou live; God geve thee goode chance,
 And in vertue send the continuance,
 For of thy speking I have gret deinte.
 I have a sone, and by the Trinite
 It were me lever than twenty pound worth lond,
 Though it right now were fallen in my hond,
 He were a man of swiche discretion,
 As that ye ben; fie on possession,³

¹ In the Lansd. MS. the following lines are added:

‘Bot I wil here now maake a knotte
 To the time it come next to my lotte;
 For here be felawes behinde an hepe treulye,
 That wolde talke ful besilye,
 And have her sports as wel as I,
 And the daie passeth fast certainly.
 Therefore, oste, taketh now goode heede
 Who schalle next telle, and late him speede.’—W.

[The lines here quoted are spurious, but the Ellesmere MS. and others have two additional lines, which are probably genuine, though the sentence is left incomplete. They are:—

“Appollo whirleth up his char so hye,
 Til that the god Mercurious hous the slye.” . . .

Add *He entreth*. The meaning is, the time flies till the sun enters the sign Gemini, which was the mansion of Mercury.—W. W. S.]

² All from this verse to the end of the second paragraph, ‘That wot I wel that it is good y-now,’ is supplied from the Lansd. by Mr. Wright.

³ I care not for property or possession, unless the owner be virtuous.

But if a man be vertuous withal.
 I have my sone snibbed, and yet shal,
 For he to vertue listeth not to entend,
 But for to play at dis, and to dispend,
 And lese all that he hath, is his usage;
 And he had lever talken with a page,
 Than to commune with any gentil wight,
 Ther he might leren gentillesse aright.'

'Straw for your gentillesse!' quod our hoste.
 'What? Frankeleyn, parde, sire, wel thou wost,
 That eche of you mote tellen at the lest
 A tale or two, or breken his behest.'
 'That know I wel, sire,' quod the Frankeleyn,
 'I pray you haveth me not in disdein,
 Though I to this man speke a word or two,'
 'Tell on thy tale, withouten wordes mo.'
 'Gladly, sire hoste,' quod he, 'I wol obeye
 Unto your wille; now herkeneth what I seye;
 I wol you not contrarien in no wise,
 As fer as that my wittes may suffice.
 I pray to God that it may plesen you,
 That wot I wel that it is good y-now.

'This olde gentil Bretons in here daies
 Of divers adventures maden laies,¹
 Rimyden in her firste Breton tonge;
 Whiche laies with here instrumentes² thei songe,
 Other elles redder hem for her plesance,
 And one of hem have I in remembrance,
 Which I schal seie with goode wil as I can.
 But, sires, because I am a burel man,

¹ This expression appears to be from the conclusion of Marie's *Lais* et *Eliduc*:—

'Del aventure de ces treis,
 Li auncien Bretun curteis
 Firent le lai pur remembrer.'

² They were sung to the harp, as appears from a fragment in Mr. Douce's collection:—

'Bone lais de harpe vus apris,
 Lais Bretons de nostre pais.'

At my beginnyng first I you beseche
 Haveth me excused of my rude speche,
 I lerned never rethorik certcine;
 Thinge that I speke, it most be bare and pleine;
 I slept never on the mount of Parnaso,
 Ne lerned Marcus, Tullius, ne Cithero.¹
 Colours ne know I non, withouten drede,
 But suche colours as growen in the mede,
 Or elles suche as men deye with or peinte;
 Colours of rethorik ben to me queynte;
 My spirit feleth² nought of suche matiere.
 But if you luste my tale schal ye here.'

THE FRANKELEYNES TALE.

[THE Breton lay, from which the Frankeleyne professes to have derived his story, is not known to exist. The subject, however, seems to have survived in a popular *fabliau*, which Boccaccio has drawn upon in the *Decameron*, and also introduced into his *Philocopo*. The reader will observe the difference between the spirit of the Teutonic and of the Breton fable, characteristic of the marked distinction between the Saxon and British races. The former is familiar with traits of daring and heroic virtue, and sometimes of violence and crime; the latter is tinged with a certain soft and refined licentiousness which confuses the moral perception, and indicates the presence of the Italian element introduced by the Roman colonists, but happily expelled from the national character by our Saxon forefathers. In this tale there are passages which equal, and perhaps exceed, in beauty any that Chaucer ever wrote; and indeed nothing but his

¹ This blundering about Cicero's name is probably designed as an affectation by which the country gentleman shows his contempt for all such learning.

² A most expressive phrase to denote the inability of an uncultivated mind to appreciate the beauties of style; answering to the French *gouter*.

judicious and elegant treatment could have redeemed so unpleasing a story.]

IN Armorik, that clepid is Bretaigne,
 Ther was a knyght, that loved and dede his peyne
 To serven a lady in his beste wise;
 And many a labour, many a grete emprise
 He for his lady wrouht, or sche were wonne;
 For sche was on the fairest under sonne,
 And eke therto com of so hihe kinrede,
 That wele unnethes dorst this knyht for drede
 Tel hir his woo, his peine, and his distresse.
 But at the last, sche for his worthinesse,
 And namely for his meke obeissance,
 Hath suche a pite caught of his penance,
 That prively sche fel of his accorde
 To take him for hir husbonde and hir lorde,
 (Of suche lordschip as men han over hire wyves);¹
 And, for to lede the more in blisse her lyves,
 Of his fre wil he swore hire as a knyht,
 That never in his wil be day ne nyht
 Ne scholde he upon him take no maistrie
 Ageines hir wille, ne kythe hire jelousye,
 But hire obeie, and folowe hire wille in al,
 As any lover to his lady schal;
 Save that the name of sovereignete
 That wolde² he have for schame of his degre.
 Sche thonketh him, and with ful grete humblesse
 Sche seide; 'Sir, seththe of youre gentillesse
 Ye profer me to have als large a reyne,
 Ne, wold nevere God betwix us tweyne,
 As in my gulte, were eyther werre or strif.³
 Sir, I wil be youre humble trewe wif,

¹ Apparently ironical.

² The Lansd MS. reads *molde*, which completely destroys the meaning of the passage.

³ Nor, would to God, that there should ever be strife between us two on account of any guilt of mine.

Have here my trouthe, til that myn herte bruste.
Thus ben they bothe in quiete and in ruste.
For o thinge, sires, sauflly dar I seie,
That frendes everyche other motte obeie,
If thei wil longe holde compaigne.
Love wil nouht ben constreyned by maistre.
Whan maistre commeth, the god of love anon
Beteth his winges, and fare wel, he is gon.¹
Love is a thinge, as any spirit, fre.
Wommen of kinde desiren liberte,
And nouht to be constreined as a thral;
And so doth men, if I the sothe saie schal.
Loke who that is most pacient in love,
He is at his advantage al above.²
Paciens is an hihe vertue certein,
For it venquisheth, as this clerkes sein,
Thinges that rigour never sholde atteine.
For every worde men may nouht chide ne pleine.
Lerneth to suffer, or elles, so most I gon,
Ye schul it lerne whether ye wol or non.
For in this world certein no wight ther is,
That he ne doth or seyth som time amis.
Ire, or sikenesse, or constellacioun,
Wyn, wo, or chaunginge of complexioun,
Causeth ful oft to don amys or speken.
On every wronge men maye nouht be wreken;
After the time most be temperance
To every wight that can of governance.
And therfor hath this worthy wise knight
To liven in ese suffrance hir behight;
And sche to him ful wisely gan to swere,
That nevere schold ther be defaute in hire.
Here may men seen an humble wise accorde;
Thus hath sche take hire servant and hir lorde,

¹ The reader will remark the elegant simplicity and practical wisdom of this passage, so characteristic of Chaucer's genius.

² That is, He who asserts the least authority in matters of love, possesses in reality the most.

Servant in love, and lorde in mariage.
 Than was he bothe in lordeschipe and servage!
 Servage? nay, but in lordeschip al above,
 Sethen he hath bothe his lady and his love;
 His lady certes, and his wif also,
 The which that law of love accordeth to.
 And whan he was in this prosperite,
 Home with his wif he goth to his contre,
 Nouht fer fro Penmarke;¹ ther his dwellinge was,
 Wher as he leveth in blisse and in solas.

Who couthe telle, but he had wedded be,
 The joy, the ese, and the prosperite,
 That is betwix an housbond and his wif?
 A yere and more lasteth this blisful lif,
 Til that this knight, of which I spak of thus,
 That of Cairrud was cleped Arviragus,
 Schope him to gon and dwelle a yere or tweyne
 In Engeland, that cleped eke was Bretayne,
 To seke in armes worschipe and honour,
 (For al his lust he set in suche labour);
 And dwelleth there tuo yere; the boke seith thus.

Now wil I stint of this Arviragus,
 And speken I wil of Dorigen his wif,
 That loveth hire husbond as hire hertes lif.
 For his absence wepeth sche and siketh,
 As don this noble wives whan hem liketh;
 Sche morneth, waketh, wailleth, fasteth, pleyneth;
 Desire of his presence hir so distreineth,
 That al this wide world sche set at nouht.
 Hire frendes, which that knewe hir hevy thouht,

¹ *Penmark* is to be found in the modern maps of Brittany, between Brest and Port l'Orient. All the names in this poem are Breton, and many will be recognized by any one who has been in Wales. *Penmark* is from *Pen*, *caput*, and *mark*, *limes*, *regio*; the first element of the word enters into many Welsh names, as *Penman Mawr*, the great headland. *Cairrud* means the red city; *Cair*, a city, is found in Carnarvon, Carlisle, and Carhaix in Brittany. *Droguen* or *Dorguen* was the name of the wife of Alain I. Aurelius is a Breton name derived from the Roman colonists. *Arviragus* is apparently a Breton name latinized, as Caractacus from Caradoc, and is found in Juvenal, *Sat.* iv. 127.

Comforten hire in al that ever thei may;
Thei prechen hire, thei tellen hire nyht and day,
That causeles sche sleth hir self, alas!
And every comfort possible in this cas
They don to hire, with al here businesse,
And al to make hire leve hire hevynesse.
By proces, as ye knowen everychone,
Men mowe so longe graven in a stone,
Til som figure therinne emprinted be;
So longe have thei comforted hire, that sche
Receyved hath, by hope and by resoun,
The empringe of hire consolacioun.
Thorugh which hire grete sorwe gan assuage;
Sche may not alway duren in suche rage.
And eke Arviragus, in al this care,
Hath sent his lettres home of his welfare,
And that he wolde come hastily ageyn,
Or elles had this sorwe hire herte sleyn.
Hire frendes sauh hire sorwe gan to slake,
And preiden hire on knees, for Goddes sake,
To come and romen in here companye,
Away to driven hire derke fantasie;
And finally sche graunted that request,
For wel sche sauh that it was for the best.

Now stode hir castel faste by the see,
And often with hire frendes walked sche,
Hir to disporten on the bank an hihe,
Wher as sche many a schip and barge sihe,
Sailinge her cours, wher as hem liste to go.
But yit was that a parcel of hir wo,
For to hir selve ful oft, 'alas!' seid sche,
'Is ther no schip, of so many as I se,
Wil bringen home my lorde? than were myn herte
Al warissshed of this bitter peine smerte.'

Another time wold sche sitte and thinke,
And kast hir eye downward fro the brinke;
But whan sche sawh the grisly rokkes blake,
For verray fere so wolde hire herte qwake,

That on hir feet sche myhte nouht hir sustene.
 Than wolde sche sit adoun upon the grene,
 And pitously into the see biholde,
 And seyn right thus, with careful sikes colde
 'Eterne God, that thorough thy purveance
 Ledest this world by certein governance,
 In idel,¹ as men sein, ye nothings make.
 But, Lord, this grisely fendely rockes blake,
 That semen rather a foule confusioun
 Of werke, than any faire creacioun
 Of suche a parfit wise God and stable,
 Why han ye wrouht this werk unresonable?
 For by this werke, southe, northe, este, ne west,
 Ther nis i-fostred man, ne brid, ne best;
 It doth no good, to my wit, but anoyeth.
 See ye nouht, Lord, how mankind it destroyeth?
 An hundred thousand bodies of mankinde
 Han rokkes slein, al be they nouht in mynde;
 Which mankinde is so faire parte of thy werke,
 Thou madest it like to thyn owen merke,²
 Than, semeth it, ye had a gret cherte
 Toward mankinde; but how than may it be,
 That ye suche menes make it to destroyen?
 Which menes doth no good, but ever anoyen.
 I woot wel, clerkes woln sein as hem lest
 By argumentz, that al is for the best,
 Though I ne can the causes nought y-knowe;
 But thilke God that maad the wind to blowe,
 As kepe my lord, this is my conclusioun;
 To clerkes lete I al disputisoun;
 But wolde God, that al this rokkes blake
 Were sonken into helle for his sake!
 This rokkes slee myn herte for the fere.'
 Thus wold sche say with many a pitous tere.
 Hire frendes sawe that it nas no disport
 To romen by the see, but discomfort,

¹ In vain.² In thine own image, Gen. ii.

And schope hem for to pleien somewhere elles.
 They leden hire by rivers and by welles,
 And eke in other places delitables;
 They dauncen and they play at ches and tables.¹
 So on a day, right in the morwe tide,
 Unto a gardeyn that was ther beside,
 In which that they had made her ordinance
 Of vitaile, and of other purveance,
 They gon and plaie hem al the longe day;
 And this was on the sixte morwe of May;
 Which May had peinted with his softe schoures
 This gardeyn ful of leves and of floures:
 And craft of mannes hond so curiously
 Arrayed had this gardeyn trewely.
 That never was ther gardeyn of suche pris,
 But if it were the verray paradis.
 The odour of floures and the fresshe siht,
 Wold han y-maked any herte light
 That ever was born, but if to gret sikenesse
 Or to gret sorwe held it in distresse,
 So ful it was of beaute and plesaunce.
 And after dinner gan thay to daunce
 And singe also, sauf Dorigen alone,
 Which made alway hire compleynt and hire mone,
 For sche ne sawh him on the daunce go,
 That was hir housbond, and hire love also;
 But natheles sche moste hir time abide,
 And with good hope lete hire sorwe slide.
 Upon this daunce, amonges othere men,
 Daunced a squier before Dorigen,
 That fresscher was and jolier of array,
 As to my dome, than is the moneth of May.

¹ Chess and backgammon are supposed to be very ancient. The former is mentioned in the *Iliad*. 'Robert of Gloucester,' a poet of the reign of Edward I., enumerates it among other knightly amusements:—

'Wyth playyng at tables, other atte chekere,
 Wyth castyng, other wyth sætyng, other in some other manere.'

He singeth and daunseth passing any man,
 That is or was siththe that the world began ;
 Therwith he was, if men schuld him describe,
 On of the beste faringe men on live,
 Yonge, strong, riht virtuous, and riche, and wise,
 And wel beloved, and holden in gret prise.
 And schortly, if the soth I tellen schal,
 Unweting of this Dorigen at al,
 This lusty squier, servant to Venus,
 Which that y-cleped was Aurilius,
 Had loved hire best of any creature
 Two yere and more, as was his adventure ;
 But never dorst he tellen hire his grevance,
 Withouten cuppe he drank al his penance.¹
 He was dispeired, nothing dorst he seye,
 Sauf in his songes somewhat wolde he wreye
 His woo, as in a general compleyning ;
 He said, he loved, and was beloved nothing.
 Of suche matier made he many layes,
 Songes, compleyntes, roundeleys, vielayes ;²
 How that he dorste not his sorwe telle,
 But languissheth as doth a fuyr in helle ;
 And deie he must, he seid, as did Ekko³
 For Narcisus, that dorst nought telle hir wo.
 In other maner than ye here me seye
 Ne dorst he nouht to hire his wo bewreye,

¹ This line is obscure ; but it seems to mean, He indulged his sorrow without limit, as one who drinks without cup ; i. e., without measure.

² Of these kinds of poems we have examples in Chaucer's works, as in *The Complaint of Mars and Venus*. The poem beginning—

' Alone walking
 In thought plainyng
 And sore sighing,
 All desolate,' (vol. iii. p. 426)

is a specimen of the vielaye, nearly synonymous with 'round' or 'roundelet,' the origin, probably, of what is now called a 'catch.'

³ *Metamorph.*, lib. iii. 370. Ovid was a favourite author in the middle ages, and Mr. Wright says that the story of *Narcissus* was made the subject of a French *fabliau*.

Sauf that paraventure som time at daunces,
 Ther yonge folk kepen her observaunces,
 It may wel be he lokod on hir face
 In suche a wise, as man that axeth grace,
 But nothing wiste sche of his entent.
 Natheles it happed, er they thennes went,
 Because that he was hire neighebour,
 And was a man of worschipe and honour,
 And had y-knowen him oft times yore,
 Thei felle in speche, and forth ay more and more
 Unto his purpos drowh Aurilius;
 And whan he sawh his time, he seide thus.
 'Madame,' quod he, 'by God, that this world made
 So that I wist it might your herte glade,
 I wolde that day, that your Arviragus
 Went over see, that I Aurilius
 Had went ther I schold never come agein;
 For wel I wot my servise is in vein,
 My guerdon nys but bresting of myn herte.
 Madame, reweth upon my peines smerte,
 For with a word ye may me sle or save.
 Here at youre feet God wold that I were grave:
 I ne have as now no leiser more to seye;
 Have mercy, swete, or ye wol do me deye.'

Sche gan to loke upon Aurilius;
 'Is this your wil,' quod sche, 'and say ye thus?
 Never erst,' quod sche, 'ne wist I what ye ment;
 But now, Aurilie, I know your entent.
 By¹ thilke God, that gave me soule and lif,
 Ne schal I never ben untrewed wif
 In word ne werk; as fer as I have witte,
 I wil ben his to whom that I am knitte.
 Take this for final answer as of me.'
 But after that in play thus seide sche:
 'Aurilie,' quod sche, 'by hihe God above,
 Yit wil I graunte you to be your love,

¹ Mr. Wright reads *But*.

(Sin I yow see so pitously compleyne),
 Loke, what day that endelong Breteigne
 Ye remewe al the rokkes, ston by ston,
 That they ne letten schip ne bote to gon;
 I say, whan ye have maad this cost so clene
 Of rokkes, that ther nys no ston y-sene,
 Than wol I love yow best of any man,
 Have here my trouthe, in al that ever I can;
 For wel I wot that that schal never betide.
 Let suche folie out of youre herte glide.
 What deynte scholde a man have in his lif,
 For to go love another mannes wif,
 That hath hir body whan that ever him liketh?
 Aurilius ful often sore siketh;
 'Is ther non other grace in you?' quod he.
 'No, by that Lord,' quod sche, 'that maked me.'
 Wo was Aurilie whan that he this herde,
 And with a sorweful herte he thus answerde.
 'Madame,' quod he, 'this were an impossible.
 Than moste I deie of sodeyn deth horrible.'
 And with that word he turned him anon.

Tho come hir other frendes many on,
 And in the alleyes romed up and down,
 And nothing wist of this conclusioun,
 But sodeynly began to revel newe,
 Til that the brighte sonne had lost his hewe,
 For the orizont had reft the sonne his liht,
 (This is as much to sayn as it was nyht);¹
 And home thei gon in joye and solas;
 Sauf only wrecche Aurilius, alas!
 He to his hous is gon with sorweful herte.
 He saith, he may not from his deth asterte.
 Him semeth, that he felt his herte colde.
 Up to the heven his handes gan he holde,

¹ The Frankeleyne appears to have been inadvertently betrayed into the use of a poetical expression, which he hastens to translate into plain English.

And on his knees bare he set him doun,
 And in his raving seid his orisoun.
 For verray wo out of his witte he braide,
 He nyst nouht what he spak, but thus he seide;
 With pitous herte his pleynt hath he begonne
 Unto the goddes,¹ and first unto the sonne.
 He seid, 'Apollo, God and governour
 Of every plante, herbe, tre, and flour,
 That givest after thy declinacioun
 To eche of hem his tyme and sesoun,
 As that thin herbergh chaungeth low and hihe;
 Lord Phebus, cast thy merciablen eye
 On wrecche Aurilie, which that am for-lorne.
 Lo, lord, my lady hath my deth y-sworne
 Withouten gilt, but thy benignite
 Upon my dedly herte have some pite.
 For wel I wot, lord Phebus, if you lest,
 Ye may me helpen, sauf my lady, best.
 Now voucheth sauf, that I may you devise
 How that I may be holpe and in what wise.
 Your blisful suster, Lucina² the schene,
 That of the see is chief goddes and qwene;—
 Though Neptunus have deite in the see,
 Yit emperes aboven him is sche;
 Ye knowe wel, lord, that right as hir desire
 Is to be quiked and lihted of your fire,
 For which sche folwith yow ful besily,
 Right so the see desireth naturelly
 To folwen hir, as sche that is goddesse
 Both in the see and rivers more and lesse.
 Wherfor, lord Phebus, this is my request,
 Do this miracle, or do myn herte brest;

¹ See *ante*, p. 335, note 1.

² One of the names of Diana, here called goddess of the sea, because the tides are influenced by the changes of the moon. He does not address himself to Diana immediately, probably because he could not expect that such a prayer should be favourably received by the goddess of chastity.

That now next at this opposicioun,
 Which in the signe schal be of the Lyoun,
 As preyeth hire so grete a flood to bringe,
 That five fathome at the lest it overspringe
 The hihest rokke in Armorik Bretaine,
 And let this flod endure yeres twaine;
 Than certes to my lady may I say,
 Holdeth your hest, the rokkes ben away.
 Lord Phebus, this miracle doth for me,
 Prey hire sche go no faster cours than ye;
 I sey this, preyeth your suster that sche go
 No faster cours than ye this yeres tuo;
 Than schal sche even be at ful alway,
 And spring-flood lasten bothe night and day.
 And but sche vouchesauf in suche manere
 To graunten me my sovereigne lady dere,
 Prey hir to sinken every rok adoun
 Into hir owen darke regioun
 Under the grounde, ther Pluto duelleth inne,
 Or nevermo schal I my lady wyne.
 Thy temple in Delphos wil I barfote seke;¹
 Lord Phebus, se the teres on my cheke,
 And on my peyne have some compassioun.
 And with that word in sorwe he fel adoun,
 And longe time he lay forth in a traunce.
 His brother, which that knew of his penaunce,
 Up cauht him, and to bed he hath him brouht.
 Dispeired in this turment and this thouht,
 Let I this woful creature lye,
 Chese he for me whether he wol leve or deye.

Arviragus with hele and grete honour
 (As he that was of chevalrie the flour)
 Is comen home, and other worthy men.
 O, blisful art thou now, thou Dorigen,
 That hast thy lusty housbond in thin arnes,
 The fressche knight, the worthy man of arnes,

¹ Vows and pilgrimages were common to all forms of religion.

That loveth the, as his owen hertes lif;
 Nothing list him to be imaginatif,
 If any wight had spoke, while he was oute,
 To hire of love; he had of that no doute;
 He nouht entendeth to no suche matere,
 But daunceth, justeth, and maketh mery chere.
 And thus in joye and blisse I let hem dwelle,
 And of the sike Aurilius wol I telle.
 In langour and in turment furius
 Two yere and more lay wrecche Aurilius,
 Er any foot on erthe he mighte gon;
 Ne comfort in this time had he non,
 Sauf of his brother, which that was a clerk.
 He knew of al this wo and al this werk;
 For to non other creature certein
 Of this matere he dorste no word. seyn;
 Under his brest he bar it more secre
 Than ever dede Pamphilus for Galathe.¹
 His brest was hole withouten for to sene,
 But in his herte ay was the arwe kene;
 And wel ye wote that of a sursanure
 In surgerie ful perilous is the cure,
 But men myght touch the arwe or come therby.
 His brother wepeth and weyleth prively,
 Til at the last him fel in remembraunce,
 That whiles he was in Orleauce in Fraunce,²
 As yonge clerkes, that ben likerous
 To reden artes that ben curious,

¹ Urry, misled by his classical learning, altered this line to

‘Than Polyphemus did for Galathee;’

but the allusion is to a Latin poem popular in Chaucer's time, in which Pamphilus describes his love of Galatea in the following style:—

‘Vulneror, et clausum porto sub pectore telum,’ &c.

—See TYRWHITT.

² The University of Orleans was a celebrated seat of learning till it was supplanted by that of Paris; and, as Mr. Wright remarks, the rivalry between them probably gave rise to the imputation that magic was practised at Orleans.

Seken in every halke and every herne¹
 Particulere sciences for to lerne,
 He him remembreth, that upon a day,
 At Orleunce in studie a boke he seye
 Of magik naturel, which his felaw,²
 That was that time a bachelor of law,
 Al were he ther to lerne another craft,
 Had prively upon his desk y-laft;
 Which book spak moche of operaciouns
 Touchinge the eight and twenty mansiouns
 That longen to the mone, and suche folie
 As in oure dayes nys not worth a flye;
 For holy cherches feith,³ in our byleve,
 Ne suffreth non illusioun us to greve.
 And whan this boke was in his remembraunce,
 Anon for joye his herte gan to daunce,
 And to him self he seide prively;
 'My brother schal be warissshed hastily;
 For I am siker that ther be sciences,
 By which men maken divers apparences,
 Such as this subtil tregetoures pleyn.⁴
 For oft at festes have I wel herd seyn,

¹ Every hole and corner.

² See note 4 below.

³ In the examination of conscience by the ten commandments, the old books of theology class fortune-telling, magic, interpretation of dreams, and, in short, the belief in any power not dependent upon God, among the breaches of the first commandment.

⁴ Tyrwhitt here observes:—'If we compare the feats of the *tregetours*, as described in this passage, with those which are afterwards performed by the clerke's magic, for the entertainment of his guests, we shall find them very similar; and they may both be illustrated by the following account which Sir John Mandevile has given of the exhibition before the *grete chan*:—'And then comen *jogulours* and *enchantoures*, that don many marvaylles; for they maken to come in the ayr the sonne and the mone, be scmynge, to every mannes sight. And after they maken the night so dark, that no man may see no thing. And after they maken the day to come ayen fair and pleasant with bright sonne to every mannes sight. And then they bringen in *daunces* of the fairest damyselles of the world and richest arrayed. . . . And than they make *knyghtes* to *jousten* in armes full lustily, &c. And than they make to come in *huntynge* for the hert and for the boor. with houndes renning with open mouthe.'—MANDEVILE'S *Travels*, p.

That tregetoures, within an halle large,
 Have made come in a water and a barge,
 And in the halle rowen up and down.
 Som time hath semed come a grim lyoun;
 And som time floures springe as in a mede;
 Som time a vine, and grapes white and rede;
 Som time a castel al of lime and ston,
 And whan hem liketh voideth it anon;
 Thus semeth it to every mannes sight.
 Now than conclude I thus, if that I might
 At Orleunce som olde felaw finde,
 That hath this mones mansions in mynde,
 Or other magik naturel above,
 He scholde wel make my brother have his love.
 For with an apparence a clerk may make
 To mannes sight, that alle the rokkes blake
 Of Breteigne were y-voided everichon,
 And schippes by the brinke comen and gon,
 And in suche forme endure a day or tuo;
 Than were my brother warissshed of his wo,
 Than most sche nedes holden hire behest,
 Or elles he schal schame hire at the lest.
 What schold I make a lenger tale of this?
 Unto his brothers bedde comen he is,
 And suche comfort he gaf him, for to gon
 To Orleunce, that he up stert anon,
 And on his way forth-ward than is he fare,
 In hope for to ben lissed of his care.
 Whan they were come almost to that cite,
 But if it were a tuo furlong or thre,
 A yonge clerke roming by himself they mette,
 Which that in Latine thriftily hem grette.

285—6. See also p. 261:—‘And wher it be by craft or nygromancye, I wot nere.’ *Tregetour* appears to be derived from *treget*, *deceit*, which has probably the same root as *trebuchet*, a machine used in war, also a snare for catching birds. The same word may be traced in the Italian *trabocchetto*, a species of *trap-door*; from which *tregetour* is possibly derived, as Tyrwhitt supposes, in consequence of his frequent use of such deceptions.

And after that he seyð a wonder thinge;
 'I know,' quod he, 'the cause of your comynge.'
 And er they forther any foote went,
 He told hem al that was in her entent.
 This Breton clerk him asked of felawes,
 The which he had y-knowen in olde dawes;¹
 And he answerd him that they dede were,
 For which he wept ful often many a tere.

Doun of his hors Aurilius light anon,
 And forth with this magicien is he gon
 Home to his hous, and made him wel at ese;
 Hem lacked no vitaille that might hem plesse.
 So wel arraied hous as ther was on,
 Aurilius in his lif saw never non.
 He schewed him, er they went to soupere,
 Forestes, parkes ful of wild dere.
 Ther saw he hartes with her hornes hee,
 The gretest that were ever seen with eye.
 He saw of hem an hundred slain with houndes,
 And som with arwes blede of bitter woundes.
 He saw, whan voided were the wilde dere,
 Thise faukoners upon a faire rivere,
 That with hir haukes han the heron slein.
 Tho saw he knyhtes justen in a pleyn.
 And after this he dede him suche plesaunce,
 That he him schewed his lady in a daunce,
 On which him selven daunced, as him thouht.²
 And whan this maister, that this magik wrouht,
 Saw it was time, he clapped his hondes two,
 And, fare wel! al the revel is ago.
 And yet remued they never out of the hous,
 Whiles they sawe alle this sightes mervelous;
 But in his stodie, ther his bokes be,
 They saten stille, and no wight but they thre.

¹ The change of *days* into *dawes*, for the sake of the rhyme, is a very great poetical licence. The Breton clerk is very naturally represented as asking after his old college companions.

² See *ante*, p. 501, note 4.

To him this maister called than his squyere,
 And sayde him thus, 'May we go to soupere?
 Almost an houre it is, I undertake,
 Sin I yow bad our soper for to make,
 Whan that this worthy men wenten with me
 Into my stodie, ther as my bokes be.'
 'Sire,' quod this squyere, 'whan it lyketh you,
 It is al redy, though ye wolde righte now.'
 'Go we than soupe,' quod he, 'as for the best,
 This amorous folk som time moste have rest.'

At after¹ soper fel they in trete
 What somme schold his maisters guerdon be,
 To remue alle the rokkes of Bretaigne,
 And eke fro Gerounde to the mouth of Seine.²
 He made it strange, and swore,³ so God him save,
 Lesse than a thousand pound he wolde nought have,⁴
 Ne gladly for that somme he woldè not goon.
 Aurilius with blisful hert anoon
 Answerde thus; 'Fy on a thousand pound!
 This wyde world, which that men say is round,
 I wold it give, if I were lord of it.
 This bargeyn is ful dryve, for we ben knyht;
 Ye schal be payed trewly by my trouthe.
 But loketh now, for necligence or slouthe,
 Ye tarie us heer no lenger than to morwe.'
 'Nay,' quod this clerk, 'have her my faith to borwe.'
 To bed is goon Aurilius whan him leste,
 And wel neigh al night he had his reste,
 What for his labour, and his hope of blisse,
 His woful hert of penaunce had a lisse.

¹ The expression *at after* is still used in Yorkshire.

² Including the coasts of Saintonge, Poitou, Bretagne, and part of Normandy.

³ The attentive reader will no doubt have remarked that the correct grammatical inflections of the verb have not been preserved in the part taken from Tyrwhitt, with nearly so much exactness as in that founded upon the Harl. MS. Thus, in this page, we have the verb in the plural, *swore*, with the subject, *he*, in the singular.

⁴ The lacuna in the Harl. MS. ends with this line. See *ante*, p. 484 note 1.

Upon the morwe, whan that it was day,
 To Breteign take thei the righte way,
 Aurilius, and this magicien bisyde,
 And ben descendid ther thay wol abyde;
 And this was, as these bookes we remembre,
 The colde frosty scisoun of Decembre.
 Phebus wax old, and hewed lyk latoun,
 That in his hoothe declinacioun
 Schon as the burned gold, with stremes bright;
 But now in Capricorn adoun he light,
 Wher as he schon ful pale, I dar wel sayn.
 The bitter frostes with the sleet and rayn
 Destroyed hath the grene in every yerd.
 Janus sit by the fuyr with double berd,¹
 And drynketh of his bugle horn the wyn;
 Biforn him stont the braun of toskid swyn,²
 And *nowel*³ crieth every lusty man.
 Aurilius, in al that ever he can,

¹ Janus, with double beard, represents the winter solstice.

² The boar's head was the appropriate dish at Christmas. Aubrey, in a MS., dated 1678, says, 'Before the last civil wars, in gentlemen's houses at Christmas, the first diet that was brought to table was a boar's head with a lemon in his mouth.' Morant, in his account of Horn Church, *Hist. Essex*, i. 74, informs us that 'the inhabitants pay the great tithes on Christmas-day, and are treated with a bull and brawn. The boar's head is wrestled for. The poor have the scraps.'—*BRAND'S Pop. Antiq.* See *ante*, p. 438, note 5.

³ Speght says that this word 'signifieth *Deus nobiscum*, and is taken for Christmas and twenty or thirty daies next before.' Tyrwhitt gives another derivation from *Menage*, in voce *Nowel*. He says, 'Noël in French is derived from *natalis*, and signified originally a cry of joy at Christmas, *le jour natal de nôtre Seigneur*. It was afterwards the usual cry of the people upon all occasions of joy and festivity.'—*Hist. de Charles VII.*, par Chartier, p. 3. At the proclamation of Henry VI., 'fut crié sur la fosse de son père à haute voix, Vive le Roy Henri, Roy de France et d'Angleterre; et avec eela fut crié Noël des assistans, confortans les dits Anglois.' Notwithstanding the high authority of *Menage*, this word would rather appear to be derived from the French *nouvelles*, news, and to have been adopted as an appropriate cry of joy at the festival of our Lord's nativity, from the angelic announcement to the shepherds, 'Behold, I bring you good tidings,' &c., Luke ii. 10: whence the Christian dispensation itself is called *Ευαγγελιον*, translated into the Saxon Gospel, good news, or nouvelles. The cry *Nowel* will

Doth to his maister chier and reverence,
 And peyneth him to doon his diligence
 To bringen him out of his peynes smerte,
 Or with a swerd that he wold slytte his herte.

This subtil clerk such routhe had of this man,
 That night and day he spedeth him, that he can,
 To wayte a tyme of his conclusioun;
 This is to say, to make illusioun,
 By such an apparence of jogelrie,
 (I can no termes of astrologie)
 That sche and every wight schold wene and saye,
 That of Breteygn the rokkes were awaye,
 Or elles they sonken were under the grounde.
 So atte last he hath a tyme i-founde
 To make his japes and his wrecchednesse
 Of such a supersticious cursednesse.
 His tables Tollitanes¹ forth he bröught
 Ful wel corrected, ne ther lakked nought,

thus be less inappropriate to any general occasion for rejoicing than it would be if derived from *Deus nobiscum*, or *natalis*.

This view is sustained by the fact that the Christmas carols generally took the form of tidings, or *nouvelles*, delivered by an angel, as in the following simple, but beautiful, specimen in the Northern dialect, printed at Edinburgh in 1621 from an old copy, and given in Brand's *Pop. Antiq.*:

I come from hevin to tell
 The best *nowellis* that ever befell;
 To yow this tythings trew I bring
 And I will of them say and sing.

This day to yow is borne ane childe
 Of Marie meike and Virgine mylde;
 That blissit barne, benign and kynde,
 Sall yow rejoice baith heart and mynd.

[The derivation of *noël* is from Lat. *natalis*; cf. Provençal *nadal*. The derivation suggested from *nouvelles* is not reconcilable with phonetic laws. See Brachet.—W. W. S.]

¹ The astronomical tables composed by order of Alfonso X., King of Castile, about the middle of the thirteenth century, were sometimes called *Tabulæ Toletanæ*, from their being adapted to the city of Toledo. —T. 'The poet describes the *Alphonsine* astronomical tables by the several parts of them, wherein some technical terms occur which were used by the old astronomers, and continued by the compilers of those

Neither his collect, ne his expans yeeres,
 Neither his rootes, ne his other geeres,
 As ben his centris, and his argumentis,
 And his proporcionels convenientis
 For her equaciouns in every thing.
 And by his thre speeres in his worching,
 He knew ful wel how fer Allnath was schove
 Fro the heed of thilk fixe Aries above,
 That in the fourthe speere considred is.
 Ful subtilly he calkiled al this.
 Whan he had founde his first mancioun,
 He knew the remenaunt by proporcioun;
 And knew the arisyng of this moone wel,
 And in whos face, and terme, and every del;
 And knew ful wel the moones mancioun
 Acordaunt to his operacioun;
 And knew also his other observaunces,
 For suche illusiouns and suche meschaunces,
 As hethen folk¹ used in thilke dayes.
 For which no lenger maked he delayes,

tables. *Collect yeeres* are certain sums of years with the motion of the heavenly bodies corresponding to them, as of 20, 40, 60, 80, 100, &c., disposed into tables; and *expans yeeres* are the single years, with the motions of the heavenly bodies answering to them, beginning at 1, and continued on to the smallest collect sum, as 20, 40, &c. A *root* or *radix* is any certain time, taken at the author's pleasure, from which, as an *era*, the celestial motions are to be computed. By *Proporcionels convenientis* are meant the tables of proportional parts. *Centre*, *argument*, and other terms there used, have peeuiliar significations in the old astronomers and the Alphonsine writers, well known to astronomers, which it would be too tedious to explain here, as well as unnecessary for common readers.—Additions to Urry's *Gloss*. *Speere* means of course sphere. '*Alnath* is a fixed star in the horns of Aries, from whence the first mansion of the moon taketh his name.'—S. *Mancioun* appears to have the same meaning as *house* in the following problem in Chaucer's treatise on the use of the *Astrolabie*:—'The conelusion of the equation of houses after the astrolabie.' *Centris* is explained in the same treatise as follows:—'The names of the sterres ben written in the margine of thy reete [explained before to mean a part of the instrument which resembles a net] there they sit, of the whyehe sterres the small point is cleped the *centure*.'

¹ The Franklin very properly classes all these observances among the illusions of the classical idolatry.

But thurgh his magik, for a wike or tweye,
It semed that the rokkes were aweye.

Aurilius, which yet dispayred is
Wher he schal han his love or fare amys,
Awayteth night and day on this miracle;
And whan he knew that ther was noon obstacle,
That voyded were these rokkes everichoon,
Doun to his maistres feet he fel anoon,
And sayd; 'I wrecched woful Aurilius,
Thanke you, lord, and my lady Venus,
That me han holpe fro my cares colde.'
And to the temple his way forth he hath holde,
Wher as he knew he schold his lady se.
And whan he saugh his tyme, anoon right he
With dredful hert and with ful humble cheere
Salued hath his owne lady deere.

'My soverayn lady,' quod this woful man,
'Whom I most drede, and love, as I can,
And lothest were of al this world displese,
Nere it that I for you have such desese,
That I most deye her at youre foot anoon,
Nought wold I telle how me is wo bygoon,
But certes outhur most I dye or pleyne;
Ye sleen me gulteles for verrey payne.
But of my deth though that ye have no routhe.
Avyseth yow, or that ye breke your trouthe;
Repenteth yow for thilke God above,
Or ye me sleen, bycause that I you love.
For, madame, wel ye woot what ye han hight;
Nat that I chalenge eny thing of right
Of yow, my soverayn lady, but youre grace;
But in a gardyn yonde, at such a place,
Ye wot right wel what ye byhighte me,
And in myn hond your trouthe plighte ye,
To love me best; God woot he sayde so,
Al be that I unworthy am therto;
Madame, I speke it for thonour of yow,
More than to save myn hertes lif right now;

I have do so as ye comaunded me,
 And if ye vouchesauf, ye may go se.
 Doth as you list, have youre byheste in mynde,
 For quyk or deed, right ther ye schul me fynde;
 In yow lith al to do me lyve or deye?
 But wel I wot the rokkes ben aweye.'

He taketh his leve, and sche astoned stood;
 In alle hir face nas oon drop of blood;
 Sche wende never have be in such a trappe.
 'Allas!' quod sche, 'that ever this schulde happe!
 For wend I never by possibilite,
 That such a monstre or merveyl mighte be;
 It is agayns the proces of nature.'
 And hom sche goth a sorwful creature,
 For verray fere unnethe may sche go.
 Sche wepeth, wayleth al a day or tuo,
 And swowneth, that it¹ routhe was to see;
 But why it was, to no wight tolde sche,
 For out of toune was goon Arviragus.
 But to hir self sche spak, and sayde thus,
 With face pale, and with ful sorwful chiere,
 In hir compleint, as ye schul after hiere.

'Allas!' quod sche, 'on the, Fortune, I pleyne,
 That unwar wrapped me hast in thy cheyne,
 Fro which tescape, woot I no socour,
 Save oonly deth, or elles dishonour;
 Oon of these tuo bihoveth me to chese.
 But natheles, yet have I lever leese
 My lif, than of my body to have schame,
 Or knowe my selve fals, or lese my name;
 And with my deth I may be quyt, I wys.
 Hath ther not many a noble wyf, er this,
 And many a mayden, slayn hir self, allas!
 Rather than with her body doon trespas?

¹ Tyrwhitt's reading is here adopted in preference to *in*, that of the Harl. MS., which seems to give no sense.

Yis¹ certeynly; lo, stories² beren witnes.
 Whan thritty tirauntz ful of cursednes
 Hadde slayn Phidon in Athenes atte fest,
 Thay comaunded his doughtres to arest,
 And bryngen hem biforn hem in despit
 Al naked, to fulfille her foule delyt;
 And in her fadres blood they made hem daunce
 Upon the pavymment, God geve hem meschaunce.
 For which these woful maydens, ful of drede,
 Rather than they wolde lese her maydenhede,
 They prively ben stert into a welle,
 And drenched hem selsen, as the bookes telle.
 'They of Mecene leet enquire and seeke
 Of Lacidomye fifty maydenes eeke,
 On which thay wolden doon her leccherie;
 But was ther noon of al that companye

¹ It is observed by the Rev. R. Chenevix Trench, in his admirable work *On the Study of Words*, that 'the fine distinction between 'yea' and 'yes,' 'nay' and 'no,' that once existed in English, has quite disappeared. 'Yea' and 'Nay' in Wiclif's time, and a good deal later, were the answers to questions framed in the affirmative. 'Will he come?' To this it would be replied, 'Yea,' or 'Nay,' as the case required. But 'Will he not come?'—to this the answer would have been 'Yes' or 'No.' Sir Thomas More finds fault with Tyndale, that in his translation of the Bible he had not observed this distinction, which was evidently, therefore, going out even then—that is, in the reign of Henry VIII., and shortly after it was quite forgotten.' It will be seen that this distinction is strictly maintained in Chaucer's language. Here Dorigen frames her question in the negative form, 'Hath ther *not* many a noble wyf?' &c.—to which she properly answers 'Yis.' Again, in page 516, the philosopher asks, 'Have I *not* holden cove-naunt?' &c.—and the answer again is, 'Yis.' Whereas, at page 348, the answer to the question 'Than have I gete of yow the maystry?' &c.—is 'Ye.' The negative reply to a question framed in an affirmative form is always 'Nay,' as, at page 513, the answer to the question 'Is ther aught elles?' An example of the negative reply *No*, to a question framed in the negative form, occurs at p. 516. Analogous, though not exactly similar, is the distinction in French between 'Oui' and 'Si.' The former is the reply to a question in the affirmative form, as 'Aimez vous Paris?' 'Oui,' the latter is used to contradict a negative assertion, as, 'Je crains que vous n'aimez pas Paris'—'Si, je l'aime.'

² They are all taken from *Hieronymus contra Jovinianum*, lib. i. c. 39.—T.

That sche nas slayn, and with a good entente
 Ches rather for to deye, than to assente
 To ben oppressed of hir maydenhede.
 Why schuld I than to deyen ben in drede?

‘Lo eek the tyraunt Aristoclides,
 That loved a mayden heet Stimphalides,
 Whan that hir father slayn was on a night,
 Unto Dyanes temple goth sche right,
 And hent the ymage in hir hondes tuo,
 Fro which ymage wold sche never go,
 No wight might of it hir hondes arace,¹
 Til sche was slayn right in the selve place.
 Now sith that maydens hadde such despit
 To ben defouled with mannes foul delit,
 Wel aught a wyf rather hir self to sle,
 Than be defouled, as it thenketh me.

‘What schal I seyn of Hasdrubaldes wyf,
 That at Cartage byraft hir self the lyf?
 For whan sche saugh that Romayns wan the toun,
 Sche took hir children alle, and skipte adoun
 Into the fuyr, and ches rather to deye,
 Than eny Romayn dide hir vilonye.

‘Hath nought Lucesse slayn hir self, allas!
 At Rome, whanne sche oppressid was
 Of Tarquyn? for hir thought it was a schame
 To lyven, whan sche hadde lost hir name.

‘The seven maydens of Milesie also
 Han slayn hem self for verray drede and wo,
 Rather than folk of Gawle hem schulde oppresse.
 Mo than a thousand stories, as I gesse,
 Couthe I now telle as touching this matiere.

‘Whan Habradace was slayn, his wif so deere
 Hir selven slough, and leet hir blood to glyde
 In Habradaces woundes, deepe and wyde;

¹ *Arace*, which is Tyrwhitt's reading, is adopted instead of *race*, that of the Harl. MS., as suiting the metre better. Both words are from *aracher*.

And seyde, my body atte leste way
 Ther schal no wight defoulen, if I may.
 What schold I mo ensamples herof sayn?
 Seththen so many han hem selven slayn
 Wel rather than they wolde defouled be,
 I wol conclude that it is best for me
 To slen my self than be defouled thus.
 I wol be trewe unto Arviragus,
 Or rather sle my self in som manere,
 As dede Democionis doughter deere.
 Bycause sche wolde nought defouled be.
 O Cedasus, it is ful gret pite
 To reden how thy doughteren dyed, allas!
 That slowe hem self for suche maner caas.
 As gret a pite was it or wel more,
 The Theban mayden, that for Nichonore
 Hir selven slough, right for such maner wo.
 Another Theban mayden dede right so,
 For oon of Macidone had hir oppressed,
 Sche with hire deth hire maydenhede redressed.
 What schal I sayn of Niceratis wif,
 That for such caas biraft hir self hir lyf?
 How trewe eek was to Alcebiades
 His love, that for to dyen rather ches,
 Than for to suffre his body unburied be?
 Lo, which a wif was Alceste? quod sche,
 'What saith Omer of good Penelope?
 Al Grece knoweth of hir chastite.
 Pardi, of Laodomya is writen thus,
 That whan at Troye was slayn Prothesilaus,
 No lenger wol sche lyve after his day.
 The same of noble Porcia telle I may;
 Withoute Brutes kynde sche myght not lyve,¹
 To whom sche had al hool hir herte gyve.

¹ This verse is restored from the Harl. MS. It is rejected by Mr. Wright; but it appears to give as good a meaning, and to be a better line than Tyrwhitt's.

The parfyt wyfhod of Artemesye
 Honoured is thurgh al the Barbarie.
 O Teuta¹ queen, thy wifly chastite
 To alle wyves may a mirour be.'

Thus playned Dorigen a day or tweye,
 Purposyng ever that sche wolde deye;
 But natheles upon the thridde night
 Hom cam Arviragus, the worthy knight,
 And asked hir why that sche wept so sore;
 And sche gan wepe ever lenger the more.

Allas!' quod sche, 'that ever was I born!
 Thus have I sayd,' quod sche, 'thus have I sworn;
 And told him al, as ye han herd bifore;²
 It nedeth nought reherse it you no more.

This housbond with glad chiere in good wise
 Answerd and sayde, as I schal you devyse.
 'Is ther aught elles, Dorigen, but this?'
 'Nay, nay,' quod sche, 'God me so rede and wis,
 This is to moche, and it were Goddes wille.'
 'Ye, wyf,' quod he, 'let slepe that may be stille,
 It may be wel peraunter yet to day,
 Ye schal your trouthe holden, by my fay.
 For God so wisly have mercy on me,
 I hadde wel lever i-stekid for to be,
 For verray love which that I to you have,
 But if ye scholde your trouthe kepe and save.
 Trouthe is the heighest thing that men may kepe.'
 But with that word he gan anoon to wepe,
 And sayde, 'I yow forbode up payne of deth,
 That never whil ye lasteth lyf or breth,
 To no wight telle you of this aventure.
 As I may best I wil my woo endure.
 Ne make no contenaunce of hevynesse,
 That folk of you may deme harm or gesse.'
 And forth he cleped a squyer and a mayde.
 'Go forth anoon with Dorigen,' he sayde,

¹ Harl. MS., *O Thena*.

² The Harl. MS., evidently by mistake, reads *biforn*.

‘ And bryngeth hir to such a place anoon.’
 Thay take her leve, and on her wey they gon;
 But thay ne wiste why sche thider went,
 He nolde no wight tellen his entent.

This squyer, which that hight Aurilius,
 On Dorigen that was so amerous,
 Of aventure happed hire to mete
 Amyd the toun, right in the quyke¹ strete;
 As sche was boun to goon the wey forth-right
 Toward the gardyn, ther as sche had hight.
 And he was to the gardyn-ward also;
 For wel he spyed whan sche wolde go
 Out of hir hous, to eny maner place.
 But thus thay mette of adventure or grace,
 And he salueth hir with glad entent,
 And askith hire whider-ward sche went.
 And sche answered, half as sche were mad,
 ‘ Unto the gardyn, as myn housbond bad,
 My trouthe for to holde, allas! allas!’
 Aurilius gan wondren on this caas,
 And in his hert had gret compassioun
 Of hire, and of hir lamentacioun,
 And of Arviragus the worthy knight,
 That bad hir hold al that sche hadde hight,
 So loth him was his wif schuld breke hir trouthe.
 And in his hert he caught of this gret routhe,
 Consideryng the best on every syde,
 That fro his lust yet were him lever abyde,
 Than doon so high a cheerlissch wrecchednesse
 Agayns fraunchis of alle gentillesce;
 For which in fewe wordes sayd he thus.
 ‘ Madame, saith to your lord Arviragus,
 That sith I se his grete gentillesse
 To you, and eek I se wel your distresse,

¹ The meaning of this epithet is not obvious; but it must signify the crowded street, that is, the street which was *quick*, or *alive*, with people, the most frequented street, as we say, the Main street, or High street, of a country town.

That him were lever have schame (and that were
 Than ye to me schulde breke youre trouthe, [routhe)
 I have wel lever ever to suffre woo,
 Than I departe the love bytwix yow tuo.
 I yow relese, madame, into your hond
 Quyt every seurement and every bond
 That ye han maad to me as herbiforn,
 Sith thilke tyme which that ye were born.
 My trouthe I plight, I schal yow never repreve
 Of no byhest, and her I take my leve,
 As of the trewest and the beste wif
 That ever yit I knew in al my lyf.
 But every wyf be war of hir byhest,
 On Dorigen remembreth atte lest.
 Thus can a squyer doon a gentil dede,
 As wel as can a knyght, withouten drede.¹

Sche thanketh him upon hir knees al bare,
 And hoom unto hir housbond is sche fare,
 And told him al, as ye han herd me sayd;
 And, be ye siker, he was so wel apayd,
 That it were impossible me to write.
 What schuld I lenger of this caas endite?
 Arviragus and Dorigen his wif
 In sovereyn blisse leden forth here lyf,
 Never eft ne was ther anger hem bytween;
 He cherisscheth hir as though sche were a queen,
 And sche was to him trewe for evermore;
 Of these tuo folk ye gete of me nomore.

Aurilius, that his cost hath al forlorn,
 Curseth the tyme that ever he was born.
 'Allas!' quod he, 'allas, that I byhight
 Of pured gold a thousand pound of wight
 Unto this philosophre! how schal I doo?
 I se no more, but that I am for-doo.
 Myn heritage moot I needes selle,
 And ben a begger, her may I not duelle,

¹ See *ante*, p. 297, note 4

And schamen al my kynrede in this place,
 But I of him may gete better grace.
 But natheles I wol of him assay
 At certeyn dayes yeer by yer to pay,
 And thanke him of his grete curtesye.
 My trouthe wol I kepe, I wol not lye.
 With herte soor he goth unto his cofre,
 And broughte gold unto this philosophre,
 The value of fyf hundred pound, I gesse,
 And him bysecheth of his gentilesce
 To graunte him dayes of the remenaunt;
 And sayde, 'Maister, I dar wel make avaunt,
 I fayled never of my trouthe as yit.
 For sikerly my dettes schal be quyt
 Towardes yow, how so that ever I fare
 To goon and begge in my kurtill bare;
 But wolde ye vouchesauf upon seurte
 Tuo yer or thre for to respite me,
 Than were I wel, for elles most I selle
 Myn heritage, ther is nomore to telle.'

This philosophre sobrelly answerde,
 And seyde thus, whan he these wordes herde;
 'Have I not holden covenant unto the?'
 'Yis certes, wel and trewely,' quod he.
 'Hastow nought had thy lady as the liketh?'
 'No, no,' quod he, and sorwfully he siketh.
 'What was the cause? tel me, if thou can.'
 Aurilius his tale anoon bygan,
 And told him al as ye han herd bifore,
 It needeth nat to you reherse it more.
 He sayde, Arviragus of gentilesse
 Had lever dye in sorwe and in distresse,
 Than that his wyf were of hir trouthe fals.
 The sorwe of Dorigen he tolde him als,
 How loth hir was to ben a wykked wyf,
 And that sche lever had han lost hir lyf;
 And that hir trouthe sche swor thurgh innocence;
 Sche never erst hadde herd speke of apparence;

'That made me han of her so gret pyte.
 And right as frely as he sente hir to me,
 As frely sent I hir to him ageyn.¹
 This is al and som, ther is no more to sayn.'
 The philosophre answerde, 'Leve brother,
 Everich of yow dede gentilly to other;
 Thow art a squyer, and he is knight,
 But God forbede, for his blisful might,
 But if a clerk couthe doon as gentil dede
 As wel as eny of you, it is no drede.
 Sire, I relese the thy thousand pound,
 As thou right now were crope out of the ground,
 Ne never er now ne haddest knowen me.
 For, sire, I wil not take a peny of the
 For al my craft, ne nought for my travayle;²
 Thou hast y-payed wel for my vitayle.
 It is y-nough, and far wel, have good day.'
 And took his hors, and forth he goth his way.
 Lordynges, this questioun wolde I axe now,³
 Which was the moste free, as thinketh yow?
 Now telleth me, or that I ferther wende.
 I can no more, my tale is at an ende.

¹ Harl. MS. reads these two lines thus:—

'Because hir housebond sente hir to me,
 And right as frely sent I hir to him ageyn.'

² The Harl. MS. reads *al my travaile*, which spoils the metre.

³ The same question is stated in the conclusion of Boccaccio's tale, *Philoc.* lib. v. 'Dubitasi oro qual di costoro fusse maggior liberalità,' &c. The Queen determines in favour of the husband.—T. Such were the questions decided in the 'Courts of Love.'

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